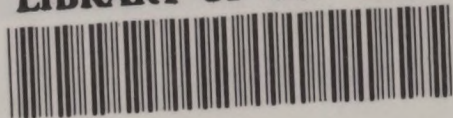


THE GLORIOUS HOPE

by
JANE
BURR

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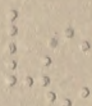
THE GLORIOUS HOPE

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BY

JANE BURR

AUTHOR OF "THE PASSIONATE SPECTATOR"



NEW YORK
THOMAS SELTZER

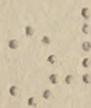
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now

TO
H. G. W.

M. v. g. fa. 28-22,

THE GLORIOUS HOPE

CHAPTER I

EVELYN KERWIN waved good-bye to "the crowd" at the little railway station and shook herself like a cat after a nap under the parlor stove. After all, she had been asleep, if not under, then beside the parlor stove for some twenty-two years. Ugh! How she hated that parlor stove with its red isinglass teeth eternally grinning at her and her dream. All the memories of her life were bound up with that parlor stove. As a little thing she could remember being bathed in front of it. As a school girl she had learned her lessons on winter nights snuggled up beside it, and from graduation day onward she had flirted across its grin with the various beaux of the village.

And now it was sold. Tony Crack, the Italian farmer, had purchased it. "Goody, goody, goody!" she murmured. "It's sold!" Then she smiled as she thought of all the little Cracks being bathed and educated and courted in the glare of those half-friendly, half-sneering red teeth.

Only the tiniest little pull came at her throat as the train wound out of Port Illington. More for sentimentality than for any real emotion she wandered to the back platform of the train and watched the tracks come to a point and dwindle away like her own past.

"Well, that's over at last," she said, going to her seat and making herself comfortable for the journey. "There isn't a single thing in Port Illington that I want. Thank all the gods, I'm through with it!" She folded her veil neatly and tucked it into her suitcase. Her coat and hat she covered with a cretonne bag (stitched up especially for the journey), then settling down comfortably against a pillow she drooped her eyelids and looked at the snow that billowed by in rivers of whiteness on either side of the onrushing train.

Sometimes it seemed to her that the succession of mounds were little graves, and she shuddered at the thought of how cold it must be under them. At other moments the bouncing hillocks were white hopes, all virgin pure without any mud spots of disappointment to tarnish them.

The farm-houses hurried by, sending out cosy little streamers of orange light, but Evelyn knew all about the loneliness that haunted the people on the home side of those little orange streamers, and her heart went out to them. Her heart went out to a farmer who spun by the window dangling a lantern from his freezing fingers. Her heart went out to the horses

stumbling along uncertainly over the creaking road. She felt sorry for everything in the world that was tied down and could not get away. That meant that she felt sorry for everything but herself. She felt glad, very glad, for herself.

There were various reasons why she should feel glad for herself. She was so glad that she began to sob a happy kind of sob, that came from burying a crotchety old guardian and selling all her household goods, including the parlor stove with the red teeth, for one thousand dollars and a railway ticket to New York.

Rupert Hughes says that for every five minutes of the day and night, one girl comes to New York to make her life. Nine-tenths of these little heroines have never seen Fifth Avenue, or a yacht, or a butler, or a glass of champagne, or the ocean, or a person of social importance, but if this is true, at least the other one-tenth are girls like Evelyn Kerwin, of good education and family: girls who have most probably had a Cook's Tour Abroad: girls who are by no means inexperienced, or ordinary, or poor: girls who are not satisfied to marry their first beau and settle down to the monotony of life in a small town, but whose hearts cry out for the chance to get somewhere and be somebody.

A modern psychologist has offered a theory that all young things should be pushed out of their homes at the age of eighteen. Evelyn Kerwin had waited

four years past the scheduled time. During those four years she had twice been on the verge of an absurd marriage, but each time some of that glorious hope of youth — call it energy, love, passion — had whispered things about a great career, and she had broken the engagement. So she was still free and now, in addition, she was rich in the possession of a thousand dollars. Young, rich, and independent, she had looked about her for a great career, and it had taken very little looking to convince her that at Port Illington, Wisconsin, she would never find any career whatever.

New York! Other cities are important for this or that, but there is only one New York. Chicago, for instance, is a place to know. One visits there, one shops there. But New York! New York is the pot of gold that lures one on to the very end of the rainbow! New York is the dream that slumbers in the brain of every imaginative youth in America. New York is the top of the world! There is nothing beyond New York!

Evelyn knew the Chicago cobblestones by heart, and she begrudged the time it took to ride from one station to the other. She begrudged the slowness of the fastest train she could take to New York. She begrudged all the daytime because it dragged, but she loved the night because it brought the glory nearer.

At last the earth that had been like a wedding-cake frosted with the January snow, began to show

a dusting of grime. The beautiful rivers of whiteness that billowed by on either side, turned black and dirty. Tin cans poked up; in a ditch some cast-off shoes, still holding the shape of the last wearer's feet, flashed stiffly by.

Evelyn looked down at her own neatly laced boots. How smooth they were! They showed none of those hideous lumpy joints that spell drudgery and long hours. She felt sorry for those shoes in the ditch just as she had felt sorry for the lonely little farm-houses a few hours before. She was so happy that she felt sorry for everything and everybody in the wide world but herself.

The New York crowds seemed more aggressive than the Chicago crowds. Uniformed men tried to grab her bags. Boys jostled her. Women stepped on her toes. The mass of people swung up the iron stairs to the main floor of the Pennsylvania station and she swung with them. The back of her skirt kept working around in front of her feet just on purpose to make her stumble. There was a squeeze in her throat and a panic in the pit of her stomach. For the first time she was a little awed and frightened at her boldness in daring to come.

"I'm not the slightest bit afraid of anything!" she said to herself, and, breathing deeply and throwing back her head, she mumbled something that she dimly remembered about "The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold, and his cohorts were gleam-

ing in purple and gold; and the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea, where the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee."

There was a conquering little turban of purple and gold on her head, and she felt a very wolf indeed coming valiantly down on the artistic fold of New York.

The second verse of the poem she had entirely forgotten —

"Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown."

Then the last triumphant line popped conveniently into her head —

"Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!"

The mere fact that she had unconsciously twisted the meaning to suit her own case in no way disturbed her workaday mind. She was far too clever to admit publicly that she felt equally mighty with the glance of the Lord, but she saw no reason why she shouldn't think it just to herself. It gave her courage; it made her thrill with the thrill of "See the Conquering Hero Comes!"

It was five o'clock, and a dark winter night. Thirty-Third Street was dingy in spite of its glare of electric lights.

Nothing is so compelling as the first sight of a

strange city. One must stop and stare even if the penalty be the guillotine.

Evelyn looked up at a second-story window on Seventh Avenue and watched a hunchbacked seamstress cover up her sewing machine for the night. Other women appeared out of the dark street doorways, stopped a moment for courage, then drawing themselves up tightly, rushed off and disappeared into the cold.

The little hunchback came down and, without even a second's hesitation, opened the street door and walked straight away into the shadows, her thin coat unbuttoned and flying in the wind. Probably she courted disaster.

Little droves of Jewish-looking men, bent-shouldered and nodding, shuffled along in the melting snow. Across the street a gay yellow restaurant advertised a seventy-five-cent *table d'hôte* on its painted front.

Evelyn waited for a break in the flow of vehicles, then crossed over and peeped through the window. It was all very gorgeous and glittery. People were swinging in through the revolving door, and swinging out were faint whiffs of music and food.

O for an invisible cap that she might wander about looking into windows all night long!

"Alone, Miss?" asked a sleek-looking gentleman.

This was so cheap to have happened to her. It was like a cheap novel and she wasn't in the least interested in that type of literature. She wasn't

afraid of him. She wasn't afraid of anything, but, nevertheless, her body trembled and her heart thumped, and she felt hanging over her the power of broad pavements, tall buildings, rushing motors, great cities — something that she had never glimpsed before — something bigger and more powerful than her own desires.

The uncertainty of things began to smother her. She clutched the handle of her brown bag with cramped vigor. Inside its darkness, among handkerchiefs and stockings and *lingerie* and blouses, nestled her letter of introduction to Anna Dickenson. Arguing that at least for her the road was friendly, she stepped up to a policeman and inquired the way to 540 East Seventy-Seventh Street.

The policeman towered above her like the Charter Oak, extending two of its branches for her suit cases.

“Did you check your baggage, Miss?”

She beamed very charmingly and assured him that what he had in his hands was all she possessed — lock, stock, and barrel. He must have thought her really nice, because he left his post and walked up to Thirty-Fourth Street and put her on a cross-town car and told her to change to the Second Avenue car, and get off at Seventy-Seventh Street and walk two blocks east.

And she *was* nice in a way, and above the average — like brussels sprouts when you think of them in a world of cabbages.

CHAPTER II

"WILL you please tell me which way is *up* town?" she asked of an old chestnut man on Thirty-Fourth Street and Second Avenue. After he told her she stood on the far side instead of the near side, and the first five cars slid by haughtily before she discovered that the slight wasn't personal. But on the whole, Seventy-Seventh Street was creditably reached if it wasn't creditably crossed.

That swarm of little human beings! Where in God's name did they come from? Who were they? . . . She tried to escape trampling them, but invariably she would step aside from one of them only to collide with another.

"Aw, lee me carry yuh baggage, Miss! Fi' cents, Miss! Lee me carry it for fi' cents, Miss!"

She was on the verge of yielding, when she hazily remembered something about child-labor laws, and decided that a young person was more in need of a sound back than he was of five cents' worth of lollipops. And then they were such filthy children! Imagine living with one's bag after the handle had got intimate with one of those germy little squirmers!

"No! No! Children!" she said determinedly, thereupon expecting them to fall away in Indian file to the side.

Had Evelyn Kerwin known more about mob psychology she would have broken all the child-labor laws on the calendar and risked living with a septic bag for the remainder of her natural days. How those cut-throats in miniature had loved her the moment before! Now as she repeated "No!" they tore at her coat tails, kicked at her luggage, and shouted ridicule in her ears.

"Baggage man! Baggage man! Adams Express Company! Lady truck horse!"

She was deeply hurt. "This, then, is the reward of altruism," she murmured, and as a sentimentalist walks over an ant hill she marched bravely on, never looking back, but hoping that not too many had been crushed in her passage.

It was comforting to talk out loud. "Never mind," she said, "I wouldn't go back to Wisconsin for ten million dollars!" But inside at that very moment she wished miserably that her dead mother were rocking beside the old red-toothed stove so that she might crawl right under the well-remembered big white apron and cry her eyes out.

In New York, people always live in the last house on the block, and (when there is no lift, and the mercury is trying to slink out of the bottom of the thermometer) on the top floor

To Evelyn the big East Side tenement was like a seven-story monster. The entrance was a huge open mouth that swallowed her suddenly, and there she stood shivering at the bottom of a grey sky-topped well, with four winding outside stairways probably leading straight up to the golden streets of heaven.

The longer she hesitated the more frightened she became. She mightn't have been so brave about adventuring if it hadn't just happened that old lady Pritchard had had a friend, Carrie Dickenson, whose daughter, Anna, lived quietly at 540 East Seventy-Seventh Street in what were called the "Model Dwellings."

Of course, Evelyn didn't know Anna — but then, after all, that didn't much matter, because Anna's mother was Carrie, and Carrie was old lady Pritchard's friend, and Evelyn knew old lady Pritchard so well that anybody recommended by her was sure to be highly respectable and kind.

Evelyn selected the stairway that included flat Fifty-Nine, and began to ascend. She panted and climbed, and climbed and panted for interminable centuries it seemed to her, and still the card-holders on the doors refused to show the homely name of Anna Dickenson.

On the fifth landing Evelyn drew her skirts tightly about her and sat down on one of the bags to rest. She looked carefully about. It all seemed quite clean and nice to the naked eye, but when one con-

siders the microscopic secrets of a drop of ordinary water, one can't be too careful.

Somebody shrieked. Heads popped out of the court windows. Folks grew neighborly in Italian, Bohemian, Scandinavian, and Yiddish. It didn't at all matter that nobody was listening. Everybody talked.

Evelyn pressed her hands over her ears. She knew there would be a pistol shot or a bomb! But nothing happened. Presently the heads all turtled back into their shells; windows banged shut; and Evelyn, clutching her luggage, started up again.

At last, like a diver rising to the surface, she reached the top floor. There was flat Fifty-Nine facing her, but instead of a door-plate with the solid name of Anna Dickenson this saucy sign painted in orange and vermilion:

MARJ PROUTY.

IF YOU ARE TIRED, SIT DOWN AND REST.

IF YOU ARE VERY TIRED,

COME IN AND HAVE A CUP OF TEA.

NO CHARGES.

Standing at the door was a lovely little chair of Chinese lacquer with a black satin seat embroidered in golden pagodas. Anybody might have flitted it away on the tip of his thumb, yet it wasn't even fastened to the wall.

Evelyn's fingers were purplish with cold. She

blew on them and stuffed them deep into her pockets. Then, as she was tired, she sat down on the little Chinese chair to rest.

Suddenly she stood up and read the sign again :

MARJ PROUTY.

IF YOU ARE TIRED, SIT DOWN AND REST.

IF YOU ARE VERY TIRED,

COME IN AND HAVE A CUP OF TEA.

NO CHARGES.

It all sounded very sweet and generous, but New York hadn't the reputation for being sweet and generous. Besides, Evelyn had read that dreadful report of the Chicago Vice Committee, and as she had a cumulative brain she had pigeon-holed what she read.

So she was just about to descend those many stairs and search out the local Y. W. C. A., when the door flew open to the music of Chinese jingle bells, and a slim young girl in a transparent kimono appeared.

"Are you just *tired* or *very tired*?" asked the young girl.

"I'm not particularly either, but I must say I'm a bit upset because I can't find the girl I had a letter to."

"Who'd you have a letter to?"

"A Miss Dickenson, Miss Anna Dickenson."

The young girl laughed and pushed her bobbed hair out of her eyes.

"Short-waisted Anna! Bless her old religious heart, she used to live here, but she's gone over with a ship-load of Holy Bibles to China."

"Oh, is that so!" said Evelyn, because she actually didn't know what else to say with her mind racing around like a rat in a pantry trying to puzzle out this charming-looking, flat-chested little girl-woman.

"I suppose you're Marj Prouty?" she ventured.

The other nodded. Then she bowed low and, spreading her arms out straight from her sides, said: "I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, come within my tent and my servants shall bathe thy weary feet and thou shalt receive presents at my hand. In other words, you're alone in a wicked city, so pick up your bags and come on inside and make yourself comfortable."

As Evelyn remembered afterwards, this probably was the moment to recall that dreadful report of the Chicago Vice Committee, bid this plausible young woman good day, and depart. Instead, she permitted herself and her luggage to be drawn inside the gaily painted door, she allowed herself to be seated in a spreading willow chair, and presently, when the little brass tea-kettle began to boil, eagerly accepted a hot cup of lemony tea and asked for two lumps.

"Now then, Miss What's-your-name, from I don't know where," her strange hostess remarked, "don't you go worrying."

"I'm not!" Evelyn cried quickly. "And I'm Evelyn Irene Kerwin, from Port Illington, Wisconsin."

"Whatche doin' so far from home?" asked Marj, flopping down on the floor in front of Evelyn and gathering a big bundle of black Persian cat into her lap.

All warmed inside with the tea, Evelyn reached into her brown bag and pulled out a huge roll of paper.

"I've come to New York because I'm a writer!" she said excitedly. "Short stories! You see, I became a regular orphan only last week. So here I am! I've only got a thousand dollars, but I'll be making loads more before that's gone. I'm disappointed, though. Mrs. Pritchard was sure that — Oh, you ought to know Mrs. Pritchard! She's the dearest old colonial thing that ever paddled around in hand-knit stockings — well, she was positive Anna Dickenson would put me up till I found some place to live!"

Marj jumped and clapped her hands with delight. The black cat, decidedly offended, spilled out on the floor and sulked away.

"Woman!" Marj screamed, clapping her hands again, "you talk faster and more incoherently than even I! You're a real find!" Then she put on a sanctimonious face. "Anna was my friend — long-legged, virtuous Anna, who is now heckling the pit-

iful Chinese. Well, for her sake, I will put you up for the night. And to-morrow? As Mr. Kipling might have said, to-morrow is another day."

Marj began pulling out dresser drawers and dancing about the flat.

"Here's a bath towel and there's one for your face, and behind that door is the tub. Chuck your pack in the little room, and if there's anything else you want, scream!"

Evelyn began to thrill with excitement. Marj was certainly different from anything she had ever seen at Port Illington or Madison or even Chicago. But then, that was just why she had come away — to see things and people that were different from people and things at Port Illington or Madison or even Chicago. This was no ten-cent movie. This was real life!

In the tub she splashed and gurgled and thanked God for His wisdom in calling Anna to the heathen Chinese. Anna was probably Port Illington or worse, but Marj Prouty — why, Marj was a million fiction stories a minute!

As a bath in a strange house leaves one a stranger no longer, Evelyn emerged flushed and reassured, and Marj plucked at the damp curls that clung to her guest's forehead and pouted.

"Lovely hair! Mine is stiff as a picket fence. Fall into your clothes now. Party here to-night.

Fancy dress ball afterwards. I'll say you're my old college chum, Eve."

"You're awfully good to me," said Eve. "Why, I'm a perfect stranger to you."

"Stale stuff, kid. Great in the golden 'forties, but won't go in New York now. You're fresh and new and I'm bored — that's the only reason on God's green footstool I'm taking you in. I want a thrill! My kingdom for a thrill!"

And then the girl-woman came close up to Eve and spoke tight-throatedly: "There isn't a day in the year that I don't drag in a weeping Italian or a Jew and water him with a cup of Orange Pekoe tea and let him talk his hands and feet off! Bored, bored! I do these things because I'm bored!"

"I thought," said Eve cautiously, "maybe you were a writer, too, and looking for atmosphere."

"Atmosphere!" shrieked Marj, twirling about on one foot and landing in a lump on the mulberry taffeta divan. "Atmosphere! Why, there's more atmosphere in that Charles Dickens family of mine that I left back there in Texas than there is on the whole island of Manhattan!"

"I suppose that's true about everybody's family," sighed Eve, undoing her hair and shaking it out into a large dark fan; "but the trouble is that one never suspects one's own family of being interesting, one's time is so occupied trying to escape them."

"Spring is coming, and this is no time for melan-

choly retrospect. Hurry, Eve, or they'll be here before you're dressed."

Eve flew to the little room and fumbled about in her once orderly bags for a certain white chiffon blouse.

"Say, you hostess lady!" she called. "May I say, Marj? Guess I'll have to if we're to be old college chums. Say, Marj, girl, what do you do for a living?"

"Oh, I'm an interior decorator person. Funny how you can get automobile trade over to the East Side if you have something new to offer them. Ever heard about Eddie Goodman and the Washington Square Players? Bunch of writers and artists mad enough at Broadway to start an East Side Theatre of their own. You ought to see the Pierce Arrows crowding around that entrance. Half the mutts that paddle over there don't understand the plays, but it's new. Hang it all, the world would break the whole Ten Commandments if you could show 'em a new way to do it."

Eve emerged buttoning up her blouse. "You know, Marj, I really suspected you the moment I saw those blue-grey curtains and that orange taffeta frill on your white book-shelf. I'm just plain stupid when it comes to decoration. If I try to arrange a bath-room, it simply laughs in my face."

"All bunk!" answered Marj, straightening a print of old Sôgi who had suddenly got tipsy in the breeze.

"Absolutely all bunk! Never studied it in my life. Simply had to do something, so I went to the library one afternoon and spent two solid hours learning how to decorate. More feeling in me for that than for *litrature*. Notice how I pronounce it. That's how they say it in Greenwich Village. You'll have to know the Village!"

"I want to know everything," said Eve, running her fingers over the big golden lampshade as though she had high hopes of coaxing some of the painted peacocks to strut off into her hands. "A big city is glorious. I thrilled all over when I came into Pennsylvania station. I'm thrilling now because you took me in. I'll never, never want to go out West again."

"Don't be a fool, Eve Kerwin!" and Marj's voice was a little trembly. "You will want to go back — that's just the sad part of it."

Marj stood at the window, her eyes on the oily grey river where a big mud-scow was floating out toward the ocean.

"You will want to go back," she repeated half to herself. "You'll cry big wet tears all over the page when you write to the girls at home, and then some day, when you can't stand it any longer, you'll go." Marj turned suddenly with her little fists clenched tight. "And then you'll find you don't fit in any more!"

Suddenly they both found themselves crying some of those big wet tears.

Marj spoke again: "Oh, it isn't that I still want Texas. It's too little, too cramped, too set in its ideas; but way off here it's so big and unstable and so horribly all alone. Sometimes I get perfectly frantic for something to cling to. . . . Put on your belt!"

Eve went into the other room and hunted for her belt. Suddenly she noticed a little black clock that was ticking its life away on the green-painted chest of drawers.

"Marj!" she called out in fright, "it's eight o'clock now!"

Marj came to the door.

"Eight o'clock? Well, what of it? You don't think folks in New York dine at six, do you? My child, this is not Port Illington. Folks here — that is, my kind of folks — dine when they're hungry."

"Yes," faltered Eve, "I know; but you haven't even begun preparing anything! Can't I do something to help?"

"Yes. You water the cretonne flowers on the bedspread!"

CHAPTER III

JUST then the Chinese bells began to jingle and Marj raced to the door, her kimono floating wide.

"Hello, Marj!"

"Hello!"

"Here's the eats!"

"Look what I brang!"

"Look what he brang!"

"Look what the Pij brang!"

Five men marched in, and Marj kissed them each as a Contessa Montessori might kiss her kindergarten babies.

Eve snatched a pearl brooch from her own bosom and pinned Marj's kimono together over her envelope chemise.

"You poor little provincial," purred Marj, patting Eve's head, "you remind me of something I had quite forgotten — my own body!" Turning, she announced: "Boys, this is Eve, an old friend of mine!" Then she leaped to the centre of the table, waved both hands, and barked: "This creature was caught in the wilds of Wisconsin by the desire to be one of us in New York! At present she's horribly tame and unmade, but shows promise of great possibilities. What am I bid? What am I bid?"

"Three pounds of chicken salad!" howled the Pigeon, dropping his donation to the supper at Marj's feet.

"Blessed old Pij!" said Marj, doubling over and kissing his bald spot. "He always brings something expensive! He's the only man in the bunch with money, and therefore the only one who is being done to a crisp all the time. But he loves it! Well, Pij, this is Eve Kerwin. Eve, this is the Pij."

He bowed low.

"Welcome to the garden, Eve, and may you find the serpent entertaining."

Marj pulled forward the next man.

"This is Daffodil. See his lovely yellow curls? Being a boy and knowing he can't overcome it, we excuse him for not being a girl."

The Daffodil was a tall blue-eyed youth who wrote verse and starved to death. He kissed Eve's fingertips with affectionate and becoming melancholy.

"And this is Butts, the tight-wad!"

Butts' two arms were laden with packages, and Eve thought Marj unjust and blushed rosily for Butts; but seeing that the others, including the laden Butts himself, were howling at what they seemed to consider a family joke, she hastily withdrew her sympathy.

"Don't you believe them, Eve!" shouted Butts, hastily unloading his packages right on the floor because he couldn't talk without his hands. "Don't

you believe them! They all say that, but I'm eternally spending money on them, now ain't I? Speak the truth, children!"

"Sure you are, and you're a dear old thing," said Marj, hopping down like a sparrow and picking up bags and packages, "but you're a tight-wad anyway, darling. Stinginess is a condition of the brain and not of the wallet. Wait till you're psychoed — you'll find out!"

Poor Butts, pretending discomfiture at the accusations he had heard a million times, placed his hand over his diaphragm and bowed before Eve. "At your service, Miss."

"He talks like a taxi-driver," said the Pij, "but he isn't. And now, Eve, let us present the Child — the sweetest, the youngest, the prettiest lad in the Village. We beg of you not to lead him astray."

Eve shuddered at hearing such adjectives applied to a man. But he *was* beautiful. He had finely modelled, regular features, and his expression was gentle and a little sad. For a moment as they stood looking at each other Eve was in doubt as to whether she should shake his hand or offer him a lollipop.

Then the Child broke forth into deep, manly laughter that contradicted his face, and Eve straightway reached out her hand and shook his vigorously.

"And this other being," said the Pij, "is Spinach the health fiend. He is famous for never having eaten a square meal in his life. But I will say this

for him, he does eat a lettuce leaf every other week whether he's hungry or not."

"I'm certainly very glad to meet you all."

Eve spoke precisely in her very best Port Illingtonese, but her very best Port Illingtonese excited only a shout of derision, and all the men except Spinach turned upon her and, wheeling her about from one to another, showered on her a succession of kisses — on the forehead, on the nose, on the chin — anywhere. And each kiss as it came burned and ached and shamed her until she was horribly hurt and ready to weep.

But she didn't weep. With a great effort of will she reminded herself that she was a writer who had come to the great city in search of life and local color. Hasn't the artist always to sacrifice something for the sake of his art? So she clenched her teeth and kept down the tears.

Spinach alone saw her unhappiness and tried to rescue her.

"Say, you loafers!" he shouted, "can't you use a little discrimination? Perhaps Eve doesn't want to be kissed!"

"Oh, you old potato blight!" cried the Pij, planting a last kiss smack on Eve's neck. "Now she's a member!"

"Stop scrapping, children," Marj ordered, "and get to work. We've got a million things to do before we go to the ball. Eve, lift up that side of the

table, and you, Daffodil, sprawl out the legs. Spinach, like a vegetable love, will you climb up and get down the yellow plates from the shelf? That's right. Now the big Canton bowl for the salad, and the big blue plates for the bread and things."

The coffee in the copper thing began to percolate, and soon the feast was ready.

"Whatche gonna wear, Marj?" asked Butts, the tight-wad, helping himself to large portions, especially of everything that he himself had brought.

"Oh, I've got a thousand yards of white net! I'll drape that over a silk chemise, and then I'll wrap that tinsel cloth around my head. But Eve! What shall we do Eve in? She's got to be lovely!"

"Leave her to me," said the Child. "But lemme eat first. Gimme the sardines."

The poetic Daffodil helped himself to a quarter pound of butter, and then, snatching Marj's spoon, sang out: "Why don't they ever have spoons enough!"

"My Gawd, look at the butter Daffy takes!" cried Butts, the tight-wad, in tones of deep distress. He had bought the butter, and while he didn't mind paying for it, he couldn't bear to have it eaten.

"Bring on the dee-sert!" shouted the Child, and they all joined in the chorus, knocking their knife ends urgently on Marj's mahogany table: "Dee-sert, dee-sert, bring on the dee-sert!"

Marj adored sweets. She actually squirmed when Daffy handed her an éclair.

"Oh, damnable old French pastry!" wailed the Child. "Who brought the French pastry? Who brought it, I say? It's made out of sea sand!" and he stood up menacingly with his fork in his hand.

Butts popped to his feet. "I bought it, if you want to know; and it came from Cushman's and Cushman's is expensive! You haven't even tasted it yet, you kicker!"

They finished the pastries, then pushed back their chairs and began to clear the table. Butts washed the dishes and the Pij dried them, and in ten minutes there wasn't a crumb to show which way the babes in the wood had gone.

"Got any silk bloomers, Eve?" asked the Child, and Eve jumped as though he had fired a revolver close to her ear.

"Why, yes — I have — I ——"

"Well, haul 'em out and let's see how we can make you up."

The Daffodil stood her on her feet and began to unhook her blouse.

"Stop! Stop! Stop!" she cried, pulling away from him.

"Well then, Miss Prissy Prunes Prisms, do it yourself, but hurry up a bit. We haven't got all night. And right here I'd like to say that you aren't on to this gang at all. You never met a cleaner

bunch in your life. You don't dope us out right, Mrs. Comstock. This is just family stuff, that's all." The Daffodil turned to the others. "Cheer her up, boys! She thinks the next degree is stepping on hot nails!"

"I'm — I'm not afraid — that is, not very," Eve quavered. "I understand."

Eve really was beginning to understand. The boys were all right, but what about Marj? Marj certainly was a problem. She didn't act like a good girl, and still she didn't act like the bad ones in the best literature. . . .

"Take off your blouse, Eve, and let's see if we can drape this Turkish thing around you and make you look like the old Pasha's favorite!"

The Pij held up an exquisite shawl, but Eve stared at him without moving.

"Take it off," he coaxed, and then he added impatiently: "For Gawd's sake, take it off — *o* double *f*, off! These men have seen more necks and shoulders than Ziegfeld!"

"Well, I'd rather take it off in my own room!" Eve murmured, feeling suddenly very hot and shrivelled.

"She's a long, long way from Tipperary, boys," hummed the Child.

"Aw, let 'er alone," Butts said. "Give her time and she'll get there."

Eve knew they would think her prudish. Never-

theless she did go into the other room and unhook her blouse alone. Then she wound the Turkish scarf about her shoulders.

"Look, folks!" Butts cried as she reappeared. "Ain't she wonderful! Gimme that lip-stick! I want her face pale and her eyelashes black and her lips like fire. Marj, gimme that green velvet for a band around her forehead. Where's that gold tassel I left here last time? Gimme! Hurry! Now, ain't she pretty!"

Eve was thrilled. The people at Port Illington certainly were dead ones. It was only these people here who knew how to find happiness. This was life. It must be life. It *was* life.

"Drop your skirt now and put the bloomers on. Oh, of course, in the other room, Miss Purity League!" And they all rushed her through the door and pretended to lock it against themselves.

Eve viewed herself in the mirror. She really was beautiful. She came out in a moment with eyes that seemed to be looking out over great broad, sparkling worlds. New worlds they were where she had not yet left her visiting card.

Nobody breathed for a full second, and then Butts, the connoisseur, broke into rhapsodies: "Ain't she got pretty legs? She's just plump enough. She's sweet as punkins!" He turned his head this way and that. "Tie the other scarf around her hips and

bring it down into a knot in front. Sure, let the two ends flow. Gee, she's great!"

Then the men began to rig themselves up. Butts became a red-robed Turk, with a great yellow turban about his head. The effect of him standing before the mirror with Eve was startling.

The Child rolled up his underclothes, wound a leopard's skin around his trunk, dismissed his socks for the evening, and slipped his bare feet into sandals. Finally, he ran a comb up through his Byronic hair and stood there a young god.

The Daffodil was a cassocked monk, and the Pij was Pierrot. Pij was unfailingly Pierrot. Spinach at the last moment pulled a black domino out of his pocket and stumbled into it.

At midnight all of them, in a joyous state of excitement, crowded into one taxi and rolled away to the artists' ball.

Music and laughter met them at the entrance of the hall, and Eve, with the Daffodil tugging at her left hand and the Child at her right, rushed valiantly into that sparkling new world to leave her visiting card.

CHAPTER IV

AT one end of the ball-room a black and white pantomime was spending itself on a toy stage. At the other end the drunken music-makers were pounding out a syncopated frenzy. The balcony all around was hung with limp arms and painted faces that gazed on the floor below, where all the madness of all the witchcraft of all the ages was rocking itself in a delirium of dance.

Eve saw nothing but the color; felt nothing but the motion. In the arms of Daffodil she floated round and round the great hall intoxicated with a dream of all the Arabian Nights rolled into one.

When the music stopped she looked so new, so fresh, so eager, that a band of comic opera outlaws bent on adventure swooped down and wrenched her from her cassocked monk.

She ducked and swerved and fought. Her temper rose until she saw the whole universe as one horrid painted lip.

Marj, with her eyes already veiled in alcoholic distances, galloped up. "Oh, go on and kiss them, Eve! Don't be a silly!"

Eve struggled and clawed.

“ My God, she’s serious ! ” shouted one of the men, letting go Eve’s arm and pulling off his companions.

She flew to the balcony upstairs. She was hot and cold and shivery. She felt hurt and ashamed, and she wanted to go home. Those men weren’t playing fair ! They were — well, they were just not nice !

To Eve a kiss was such a sort of sweet, sacred thing. She would have liked saving all hers for — well, for somebody she might some day love.

She shouldn’t have permitted those boys up in Marj’s apartment to kiss her that way either, even if they were only playing. Kissing was not the way to play. She felt instinctively for her skirt. It was gone. Then, with a shock, she remembered she hadn’t worn one. Her silk-stockinged legs made her ashamed. After all, she hadn’t come to New York to make a fool of herself ! She had come to New York to make a great person of herself !

And then, as though an alarm clock had gone off in her brain, she rubbed her eyes and examined the crowd around her and below her.

Where was all the beauty that she had seen when she entered the place ? Now, there wasn’t any beauty anywhere ! The costumes were soiled and the people were ugly and sweaty, and the music — oh, the music was still beautiful if you didn’t look at the drunken musicians.

She wanted to escape somewhere — anywhere, so

long as it was away from this human menagerie got loose from the keepers of common sense.

A rattle of laughter came up from the people directly below her. She looked down, and there was Marj kissing a man and kicking a chair bottom through to punctuate her pleasure.

The little circle applauded, so she stepped from chair to chair, kicking all the bottoms through, then sprang at last to the Pij's shoulder and shrieked for another drink.

He bore her across the ball-room and up the stairs to the little box where Eve was sitting alone. Spinach followed with two lemonades.

"Marj," he said, shaking his finger at her, "I want to talk to you seriously. You've had enough to drink!" That was Spinach's way of starting a lecture.

"Oh, come out of that forty years' grouch and take a real drink yourself! It won't do you nothing," chirped Marj in high staccato.

"I don't want what you call a real drink and you know it, and if you don't stop taking real drinks you'll die in the T. B. ward of a public hospital!"

There was a momentary quiver in Marj's little body.

"Marj, dear," Eve whispered, "please don't drink any more. You will kill yourself."

Marj gave Eve a clumsy push. "You're nice, Eve, but you're a hymnal. I hate hymns. I hate

churches. I hate preachers. I hate everything I had when I was young. Waiter, break the speed limit and gimme a Haig and Haig!"

She turned back to Eve with a silly laugh. "You poor simp, you're having an *aitch* of a time here to-night because you won't drink. You've got to drink at a place like this to keep from going crazy. You look like a fool drinking a lemonade at 1 a.m. in a fancy costume! For God's sake and your own sake, Spinach, take her to early Mass and good riddance!"

"Marj, dear, you don't know what you're saying. Please don't take anything more to drink."

Marj swallowed her whisky in one gulp, jumped to the table again, then to the railing that ran around the box and, fluttering and piping like a silly sparrow, flew off down the steps into the wriggling, writhing, half-mad, half-clad lunatics on the floor below.

"She'll commit suicide some day," muttered Spinach.

Eve didn't hear him. Her eyes were following Marj as she skimmed over the black boards of the ball-room floor.

Marj's toes were always in the air. Like a dainty sparrow her slim little child's body fluttered and lifted and flew from the arms of one red-faced man to another.

Suddenly the music stopped, and a man on the toy stage shouted:

"Clear the floor for exhibitions! Prizes will be awarded from this platform!"

The dancers fell away to the sides and sank down on the floor. Tired heads fell on sweating shoulders and aching lips kissed aching lips — it didn't much matter whose. The sun and the world were up for the day, but in the curtained ball-room belief in the night still lingered.

Muffled at first, the music soon rose to a rhythmic scream. Then from a small opening in the human tangle on the floor burst Marj in the arms of a tall white shepherd. Eve hadn't noticed him before. He was a handsome youth, slender and lithe and dark, as though all the suns of all the tropics had burned their moods into his cheeks.

Marj looked into the Shepherd's eyes. The Shepherd looked into Marj's. They tilted a moment, and then, like two eerie things of white and silver cloud, they swayed into the pulsing rhythm of the music.

They dipped; they floated; they rocked; they poised. Their bodies clung and tore apart and melted together again. Then, as a ship hoists her signal, the Shepherd twirled Marj about and, catching her under the arms, raised her fluttering before him and sailed away into the outer darkness.

For one second there was breathless silence. Then shouts! Then screams! Then a mad thunder for more! The people applauded and banged their heels on the hard floors. Women cried and laughed and

screached. Suddenly a whisper ran through the hall: the girl had fainted. The news scarcely made a ripple. The little channel through which the two had disappeared closed again, and from the opposite side of the circle tripped Pierrot and Pierrette. Instantly Marj and the Shepherd were forgotten.

Eve darted down the stairs and battled her way through the mob to where Marj lay on the floor, crumpled in a heap.

She and the Shepherd lifted her in their arms and carried her out to a taxi.

It was cold winter daylight and Marj looked as ghastly as death.

Poor little beaten Marj! She crushed herself up close to the Shepherd and shut her eyes, as though there were but one safe place in all the world and that one just where she lay.

When they reached the tenements he carried her up to bed and went away. Eve undressed her and lowered the black shades to crowd out the day.

As she stood there looking down on that exhausted little body she wondered why people did such things to themselves. Here was the great and glorious world just waiting to be conquered, but not by the Marj's of life. They, poor dears, were too busy wasting themselves.

Eve sat in a big rocker and played solitaire with her own plans. It came out right every time. What could be simpler? Anybody could do anything he

really wanted to do. Wasn't it Ibsen who said that genius was situated in the seat of the trousers? Just a little will to work — that was all. Everything else, out of sheer awkwardness, fell directly into line.

She rocked quietly. All the world was just a great big old docile doggie waiting to lick one's hand. It looked black and ferocious, but anybody could master it. All its barking meant nothing. Barking was probably its way of showing affection.

Accidents? Well, of course, there might be accidents. People did get smashed up in train wrecks and fall headlong out of aeroplanes, but, after all, a clever person could usually avoid even accidents.

Home-made wrecks like Marj had only themselves to thank. Poor little Marj, with a lot of riotous ancestors crowding down on her like a log-jam! Why did she permit it? A good lumberman would have extricated some one log that was making all the trouble. It was so very simple: Marj should merely have refused to drink, and then the whole flow of her life would automatically have been released in response to her own will.

Eve moved up closer to the radiator. It was dreadfully cold. . . .

She wished now that she had talked with Spinach about all these things. But Spinach was gone and the Shepherd was gone, and she was alone and sleepy — alone except for Marj, who still looked as though she were dead.

Eve got up and heated another iron for Marj's stone-cold feet and made a fresh ice-pack for her burning forehead.

CHAPTER V

ALL provincials taboo the word Bohemianism. To them it pictures the evil of late hours, alcohol, freedom!

But in New York, as in every large city, there are two sorts of Bohemianism. the Bohemianism of Forty-Second Street with its burnished cafés, its shifty-eyed actors and actresses, its dope-fiends, its millionaires, its well-dressed parasites; and the Bohemianism of Greenwich Village, with its bare boards, its paper napkins, its empty pockets, its hallowed dreams for remaking the world.

It was into a haunt of this serious-minded Bohemia that Spinach, the health fiend, piloted Eve on the night after the ball.

The little restaurant was in the basement of an old brownstone house in Tenth Street. In front of it, bouquets of Italian children were swaying to the latest tune of a hurdy-gurdy. The aching cold of January had relented, and the ragged sprites were dancing their prophecy of another Spring.

The dingy windows of the great house looked forbidding, and Eve lingered near the children.

Spinach grew impatient. "Please come on. We'll miss everybody that's worth while. You'll see this performance ten million times when the hot weather comes!"

"I don't care how often I see it again!" cried Eve. "It won't be this time! I've got one idea about life — hug a joy as long as possible!" Then she sighed as though the very mention of joy's name had frightened it away, and followed Spinach down the steps through an unlighted passage to a big sandy-looking room at the back.

"You see," she continued saucily as Spinach pulled her out a chair from the long, shabby table, "I'm an egotist with a certain philosophy of life, and nothing on earth can alter it. First I am a unit; that unit is really the only thing that counts. I am out for experience; that experience is to be used in my future, and my future is mapped out as secure and unchangeable as the rock of Gibraltar."

"That's all very well," he protested, "but some pretty smart folks get bogged for a while. Now take me: I'm collecting material for a world drama, but I haven't written it yet. Such things take time."

"Nonsense! I'm afraid you aren't capable of work. Get up early in the morning and do *something*, if it's only a letter to the *Times*. Do something — that's my idea. Of course, you'll call that brick-laying, but I'd rather lay bricks than dream

along until I wake up some day and find I can't even dream any more."

Poor Spinach blinked and gasped. As Eve found out later, he was one of those near-geniuses who never get anything quite finished. He had notebooks and notebooks and notebooks that he labored over conscientiously. His pockets were stuffed with more notes — stray bits written on tickets, railway guides, backs of envelopes. What became of all his notes? He emptied them periodically into a huge trunk, and there they stayed.

"As I said, Eve — I'll call you Eve if you don't mind, as I'm a Socialist and everybody's my sister — as I said, the future's all right, but why bother about it? Now's the present, and lots of famous people come here to eat, and I want you to know them. I love famous people, don't you?"

"I can't say that I care anything about them," said Eve. "What I want is to meet real people with their common-sense heels flat on the clay."

And having delivered herself of this sentiment, which was admirable but not quite true, she leaned over his shoulder and examined the menu in his hands.

It was a battered war-veteran of a card, blotched with soup and city dust, and Eve was glad she didn't have to touch it.

For that matter the whole place looked germy.

She risked a peep at the floor and then drew her skirts tight about her and sat on them.

"Now, what will you have, Miss Kerwin — I mean Miss Eve? What will you have, Eve? You see I'm a Socialist, and everybody's my sister — and anyway, I like to call folks by their first names. More individuality."

Then just as Eve was about to decide on something, Spinach left her alone and dashed off to the kitchen, where he could be heard shouting economic determinism to the cook.

A tall, thin person with a sarcastic twist on the right side of his face blustered into the room and took the seat directly opposite Eve. He shoved his hat under a chair and smoothed his thick blond hair back from his forehead.

As Eve studied him closely she realized that he looked little-boy brave, which is really not brave at all. She could almost see him clenching his fist and fighting with the tears rolling down his face.

He had a thumbed look like some rare old edition, and she felt a sudden mother pain as her eyes travelled from his saddened face to his threadbare tie and from his threadbare tie to his ill-fitting coat and frayed grey flannel cuffs.

He sat low on his spine, like someone's "Portrait of an Idealist," and Eve could almost see the angels of vision walking up the stairs of his mind and disappearing into the roofless heavens.

She felt like gathering him all up into her arms and crushing his face against her breast, and then, perhaps, kissing his eyes until they smiled. It was his eyes that smote her hardest. They had the puzzled, frightened look of an animal that was fighting for life in some strange wilderness — fighting bravely, but not quite holding his own.

Suddenly, Eve felt her own eyes filling with tears, and her hands beginning to tremble.

Just at that moment a beautiful girl — a very Goddess of Liberty at a menial job, came out of the kitchen, holding aloft, not a torch to light the souls of men, but a food-laden tray to fortify their stomachs.

The blond man opposite Eve straightened up. "Bring me some lamb chops, will you, June?"

"Anything to drink, Mr. Bird?"

Eve noticed that the June person asked the question almost caressingly.

"Thank you, no. Just some water," he answered.

June disappeared into the kitchen just as Spinach emerged bearing a huge assortment of food on a bright tin tray.

Putting it down gingerly he began to pluck off chops and potatoes, milk, bread, nuts, dates and figs, cheese, and a huge salad.

Then he looked across and discovered the blond man.

"How do you do, Mr. Bird? Want you to know

Miss Kerwin, from Port Illington, Wisconsin. She's writing books and things; and, Miss Kerwin, I want you especially to know Stanley Bird. He does the most marvellous cartoons of anybody I know."

Mr. Bird's thin body was convulsed for a moment with a sort of sarcastic inner burbling as he nodded his head to Eve. His lips parted in what seemed to be a laugh, but no sound came out.

Eve began to think that perhaps if he would laugh a real laugh, instead of just showing his beautiful teeth, he might lose some of that beaten look.

Spinach babbled on: "You see, I believe in Mr. Bird. He's a Socialist, too, and therefore a brother of mine. And he's a thinker and a genius as well. He's lost faith in himself, or he doesn't care much, or something, but ——"

June interrupted with chops for Mr. Bird, and supper for herself, and spreading it all out on the table, sat down beside him.

There was something valiant about the way she buttered a piece of rye bread and slipped it over to Mr. Bird's plate. There was something melting about the way she gulped as she watched him settle down hungrily to a meal not big enough for the 10 a.m. nibble of a Riverside Drive infant.

"Say, Bird, help a fellow out to-night!" And she pushed towards him a large glass of milk.

"Sorry. Can't do anything for you, June. Not hungry enough." He pushed the glass back to her,

"Oh, gowan. You know I get my meals for nothing, and I've drunk out of this already, so I can't put it back. I know! Bet you're afraid of my germs!" June laughed hopefully.

"'Deed I'm not, June!" And the thin man's long, blue-veined hand closed round the glass.

Eve felt relieved. At least a part of that enormous void would be filled. She tried to think of something casual to say, but she couldn't.

He spoke: "So you write, Miss Kerwin. What do you write? I don't seem to remember the name."

Eve's words came in little spurts. "Oh — I write — heaps — short stories principally — I ——"

The Goddess of Liberty looked as though she'd like to choke this new woman, and she showed it by slamming the dishes together with a loud rattle and swooping off to the kitchen with them.

"And what sort of stories do you write, Miss Kerwin?" There came again that sarcastic twitch to the right-hand corner of his mouth.

"Oh, Mr. Bird, if you don't mind, let's talk about your cartoons!"

"My cartoons!" His body rocked with silent laughter.

Spinach came to the rescue. "Now what do you want for dessert, Miss Kerwin — Eve? Here's the card. Cornstarch pudding? No, that will make you too fat. Gelatine with whipped cream? All right, I'll chase back and get it."

"Where are you staying, Miss Kerwin?" Stanley Bird looked searchingly at her. "I'd like to see you again. It warms my hands to be around with successful people."

All her life Eve had had a theory that if one claimed to be successful for a sufficient length of time, then one would just naturally become successful. Bluff should be the rule until one got somewhere, and after that modesty was an exquisite thing. But in the face of this man she felt suddenly small and mean. She was confused, and she wished with all her heart that he would not look at her so searchingly. It was as though her whole soul stood there naked and ashamed before his honesty.

Finally she found her tongue. "I'm staying at Marj Prouty's, and I'd like very much to have you come to see me. Do you know her?"

"Indeed, yes. I'll drop around to-morrow night if you'll let me." He sank low in his chair and tilted himself uneasily on the two back legs.

"I wish you would, Mr. Bird. You know where Marj lives, of course?" Eve felt a giddy little joy racing all around her brain. She'd get the chance later to explain a lot of things to him and to encourage him. Already she had an enormous desire to encourage him.

She was so fearful he mightn't find the place that she was going to write the number down on a little slip of paper. As she took a pencil out of her red

leather pocket-book, a brown-haired, sunny man came in and slapped Mr. Bird on the back. He jumped as though he had been torpedoed, and turned angrily. Then he caught himself and laughed.

"Oh, hello, Fischer. Want you to know Miss Kerwin. Miss Kerwin, this is my friend, Anton Otto Fischer. You know: paints big wolf-men in ice-bound vessels. Real guts in his stuff."

And the brown, sunny man shook her hand vigorously and sat down beside her.

"Is Kerr coming to-night?" asked Bird, pushing the messy menu toward Fischer. "Want to see him about that illustration he promised to do for the *Call*."

"Sure, there he is with England. Sit over here, fellows!" and he beckoned the two to the table. Then he continued: "Tell Piet to come on and eat now."

Piet turned out to be a Belgian who ran the restaurant and a co-operative store and a magazine on the side.

"Piet! Piet!" called Fischer, and the big ex-European with a seaman's lurch came in from the kitchen, splashing and spilling his soup impressionistically down his shirt front.

"Hello, comrades, how you feel? Good, huh? Cold as the devil to-night — huh? No? I thought it was cold." Piet, the inimitable, made one last splash as he settled his plate on the table.

His shoulders were stooped in a way that gave him

a forward rushing look. His eyes were sharp and twinkly, like a ferret's. They squinted on both sides of a lock of hair that hooked like a lobster claw over the tip of his nose.

"Well, Piet, how's business?"

Fischer pushed the French bread toward him, and he tore off half a yard.

"Damn business!" said Piet. "Let's eat!" And he waded valiantly into his soup.

The Goddess of Liberty stalked sullenly in and out of the kitchen serving the new-comers.

"June's got a real job for the summer," said Piet. "What do you know about it? Three cheers for June and the stage!" They all lifted their glasses and drank Piet's toast.

June went sulking back into the kitchen. She had been out of a job for a year, and it hadn't improved her opinion of the theatrical system.

"Well!" said Bird, on June's next trip from the regions of frying steak, "don't you care, old girl! There'll come a time when we'll have our little Socialist theatres all over the world. Then you won't have to accept the manager's attentions along with your salary."

June's temper was still in the ascendant, and she banged the food down on the table. But nobody cared about that. What they did care about was that she was straight and clean, and not for sale.

Bird stood up and stretched himself. As he

stretched, his grey flannel shirt crawled up higher and higher. His belt was so loose that his trousers hung in folds at his ankles and dusted the floor at his heels. He was utterly careless in his personal appearance — something Eve had always supposed she disliked in a man. But she didn't dislike him. . . . She thought that she had never seen anything so tall as he looked when he stretched, and at the same time so sad and little-boyish. She wanted to say something to him, but she dared not. Oh, if she could only think of some way of detaining him! Her hands were pressed tightly together under the table. She didn't know what else she might want of him in the future, but just now she wanted him not to leave her.

She half rose from her chair in her anxiety to interest him, but he turned and left without seeing her, without even bidding her good-bye.

CHAPTER VI

EARLY next morning Eve bathed and breakfasted. She dressed herself carefully and took great pains with her hair. After she had it arranged smooth and tight, she pulled out wavy strands here and there to give the effect of carelessness. She laid her blouses out in military rows on the bed, and tried them on one after another. She chose a lacy one at last, one that sat well on young breasts and rosy shoulders.

To babble where the strictest secrecy should be observed, she studied her appearance full view, side view, and back view, with a hand-mirror held at various angles.

With the conquering little turban of purple and gold on her head, and her furs hooked up carefully about her throat, she started out.

How fast the feet fly to reach a coveted place! How sturdy the legs are when the mind is full of hope!

Her success was just around the corner. She knew it. It was almost too easy. A sense of obstacles might even have lent an extra dash of pleasure to the adventure.

This sounds like an errand of love. It was. Love of success — the best love, the greatest love, the love that lasts after all the little loves are buried and forgotten.

Inside her muff Eve's hands clutched tightly the fat bundle of manuscripts.

At ten minutes past ten she entered the Street & Smith offices on Fifteenth Street and Seventh Avenue. She was perfectly willing not to start with the *Century* and *Harper's* and *McClure's*. She would show them first what she could do. Every editor was always on the look-out for a new writer. They'd discover her soon enough.

The waiting-room was clean and highly polished, like a coffin lid. It is disquieting to be in a room like a coffin lid when you don't know what to do next.

Eve sat at the centre table and turned the pages of various *Street & Smith* magazines. At half-past ten the elevator rolled up and disgorged a prosperous-looking gentleman. He rushed across the room and said something to the girl who sat at a sort of cashier's window. At once the girl opened a glass door and admitted him.

Eve didn't know what he was admitted to, but she did know that he disappeared, and that he seemed on excessively friendly terms with the girl who had helped him to disappear.

Gathering up her manuscripts, she walked briskly over to the girl at the window.

"H'm," murmured Eve.

"Well?" snapped the girl without lifting her eyes from the latest issue of *Ainslee's*.

"I've some stories," she began, "that I'd like to leave here. They ——"

The girl chopped short Eve's explanation.

"For which magazine?"

"Why, I'll sell them to any of the *Street & Smith* magazines that want them."

The girl sniffed scornfully.

"We don't accept stuff that way. Address each story to the magazine you intend it for." She pushed some large envelopes toward Eve with airy contempt in every gesture.

Eve was horribly humiliated, but she "considered the source," as her mother used to tell her to do, and with the envelopes in her hand walked quietly back to the big coffin-like table in the middle of the room and sat down.

Again she looked through all the latest numbers of the *Street & Smith* magazines, then sat back bewildered. Why all this ceremony about addressing one's stories to a certain magazine? The stories, in all of them, were exactly alike. They all began the same way, and they all ended the same way. She wanted to run. If there had been any way of eluding the eyes of that blondined creature at the window, Eve would have risked sliding down the cables in the elevator shaft,

Without puzzling her head any longer, she stuffed four stories into each envelope, addressed them haphazardly and took them to the window.

"Got return-stamped envelopes?" asked the golden goddess.

"No," quavered Eve, "you didn't give me enough, but I'll go out and buy some and come back in a few minutes."

At the corner drug-store she found a post office sub-station where she bought stamps and envelopes.

"A writer, too, Miss?" asked the old druggist, with a forlorn note in his voice. "Lots of 'em in this neighborhood."

Somehow, Eve got the idea that he, too, had been insulted by a blondined office girl, and it was all she could do to keep from throwing her arms about his neck and weeping on his grey mohair coat. But the old bravado came back and she talked gaily as she moistened the stamps.

"Yes, I write a bit!" And with the words she grew a whole new crop of egotism.

"Used to write myself one time. Sold a lot to the Munsey folks, but somebody with a newer twist stepped in and they got tired of my stuff, and I couldn't write any other kind, so I quit."

He had actually sold something! She took his hand and shook it vigorously.

"Well, don't let them down you. You just keep

on writing. You can make 'em all sit up and take notice if you want to hard enough!"

He smiled a sweet old smile and shook his head. "Child, I wouldn't write again for worlds. Haven't done a line since the old *Argosy* days."

She had no idea what "the old *Argosy* days" were. At home they had taken the *Century* and the *Survey*. She looked sympathetic, however, and murmured "I see."

He walked to the door with her and wished her good luck.

Fifteen minutes later she was drinking soda at Greenhut's fountain. "It doesn't really matter," she thought, "nothing really matters." At the same time she dug her long spoon energetically into the bottom of the glass for the last bit of cream and the last crushed strawberry. "These bitter experiences are material. Good material. All great people go through just such things."

Almost blithely she bought a *Red Book* and hurried up to the public library on Fifth Avenue to study its contents. After all, one can't be aloof from the market.

Anybody who had taken the trouble to watch her might have seen a sarcastic curl in her upper lip. At four o'clock she clapped the covers together. "Rotten stuff! The worst story I've written is better than the best of these! It's pull, that's exactly what it is — pull! People that get in have got pull!"

Out in the street she felt cold and forlorn. She couldn't gather courage enough to cross Fifth Avenue. Fifteen minutes she waited, her teeth chattering and her lips blue. Then a policeman walked over and took her arm. He piloted her across safely, and she was almost sorry he did. It might have been better if one of those ichthyosaurian 'buses had squashed her to death.

"Poor old druggist," she muttered to herself. "I bet he wrote good stuff and nobody wanted it."

Her legs began to weigh forty tons apiece and her hips ached as though she had done a week's washing. She could scarcely crawl along. She had never before believed that there was failure in the world for people who really wanted success.

"Poor old druggist. I bet he wrote good stuff and nobody wanted it."

She couldn't get him out of her mind. Suddenly she became the old man, doing a menial job in her dotage. She hunted for the job and became a cook. She sobbed as she washed the prunes and told each new mistress that she had been a wonderful writer, but the world had denied her the chance. Then she refused to be a cook any longer, and took carbolic acid. But carbolic is a frightful death, so she changed it to bichloride. One lingers horribly with bichloride. Perhaps it would be better to gain the sympathy of some chemist, get a phial of cyanide from him, go into the woods and build a huge funeral

pyre, light it, swallow the cyanide, and step into the flames.

By this time she had reached a grocery store on Avenue A. She went in to buy some crackers and cheese and things. But nobody would wait on her. People came in, bought what they wanted, went away, and still she sat there drooping on a sugar barrel without strength enough to demand attention.

She looked straight into the grocer's eyes, and his gaze went through her to the boxes of rice and baking powder and cornstarch on the shelf behind. Perhaps she was so ineffectual that she was no longer visible to the naked eye. Very well, she would soon find out.

She stood up suddenly and pushed the people out of her way.

"I want a pound of butter!" she shouted, "and a dozen eggs and a box of brown rice!"

The line of waiting people fell back, and the grocer said: "Yes, Ma'm," and jumped about like a monkey on a stick.

"Anything else, Ma'm?" he asked nervously, laying her purchases in a neat pile.

"Yes!" she snapped. "Five cents' worth of yellow cheese, a box of Saltines, and a loaf of Straight Edge bread. And be quick about it!"

"Yes, Ma'm," he said, and he was quick.

"That's all!" Eve pounded the money down on the counter and snatched up her package.

She heard the people gasp as she upset a stack of soap on her rush to the door. She banged the door behind her.

“That’s the stunt!” she growled. “Step all over ’em! Weariness is a mental attitude and you mustn’t let it get you! Imitate the fiend at the *Street & Smith* offices. That’s the kind of warfare there is in this world, and you can’t beat it with sentimentality! Don’t be like the poor old failure of a druggist! That’s no way to succeed! The *Street & Smith* girl had it right. Be a devil! Be a devil! Be a devil!”

CHAPTER VII

EVE's vicious mood lasted till she reached the tenements. Then the effort of climbing five flights of stairs again "took all the starch out of her," as her mother used to say. Arrived at the top landing, she stood dejectedly confronting Marj's fire-proof door.

Now, windows are inviting. They have expression and character. But doors are different — especially fire-proof tenement doors. They shriek "Begone!" Marj had realized this at once. That was why she had put out the little Chinese lacquer chair and painted the free-for-all invitation. Together they took off the curse.

Yes, doors are forbidding, but yet they can be trusted. They're like severe fathers who pretend to be dragons when all the time they have chocolate drops in their overcoat pockets.

Eve wasn't to be fooled by that hideous brown sheet of iron. She had seen the fairyland behind.

"Marj!" she called, flinging open the door. But Marj was gone, and the fairyland was cold and dismal.

Slinging her coat angrily at the couch, Eve banged down all the windows. Then, without even remov-

ing her hat, she went into the kitchen, scrambled three eggs, and stood at the stove eating them with a spoon. They needed salt. She looked up dramatically at the salt box, but did not reach for it. Who was she that she should have salt on her eggs?

On the way back to the living-room she munched a piece of stale bread. She hated stale bread, and there was a fresh loaf in the bread box. No matter.

She flung herself on the couch, throwing her little conquering turban of purple and gold on the floor. The black cat came up and rubbed its body against her arm and sniffed into her ear.

"Mutsie," she moaned, "this world's an awful place. You don't know it because you have Hamburger steak and raw eggs every day. You ought to be an alley cat for a week. You'd just naturally starve to death. That's exactly what you would — you'd turn your toes up from the asphalt."

It might all be perfectly true, but Mutsie wasn't going to worry her head about it. She crawled up under Eve's arm and, purring like a high-powered engine, settled herself for a warm nap.

But Eve was a talkative bed-fellow. "Think of that poor old druggist being crowded out after he had really arrived, Mutsie. Isn't it just too pathetic? Perhaps it would be better not to have so much ambition. Perhaps it would be better not to have any ambition at all. The people that seem to have the best time are the ones that follow the cow-path. But

one can't just say 'follow the cow-path,' and follow. There are all sorts of inside forces that push."

"Ugh, it's cold in here!" she said, reaching down for Marj's lovely old camel's-hair shawl. In the warm comfort of the shawl she and Mutsie soon went to sleep.

The boats slid by on the river, and the dark came down against the windows.

Suddenly over the blackness tinkled the Chinese bells, and Eve awoke not certain whether she was in Hong Kong or Port Illington, or whether it was dewy morn or starry night. She stumbled dazedly to the door.

Nobody was there. The bells tinkled again. No doubt the postman ringing from downstairs. She propped the door open with a miniature totem pole that dangled by a golden cord from the knob, and walked out to the open stairway.

"Hello, up there!" someone shouted from below.

Eve recognized the voice of Stanley Bird, and her hands flew up to her disordered hair.

"Hello, Mr. Bird! Come on up!" she shouted back.

"Hello, up there!" he called again.

"Hello, yourself! Why don't you come up?"

"You've got a lot of letters. Drop me your mailbox key."

Eve rushed back into the flat and, tying a thick cord to the key, flung it over the railing. She lis-

tened for the metallic click on the asphalt and then, not wasting another second, darted into the bedroom and rearranged her hair and powdered her nose.

Stanley Bird trudged up so slowly that she was ready and waiting by the time he finally lumbered into the living-room.

"That's a goll dern climb," he puffed, tossing a handful of long envelopes on the table and folding himself up like a camp chair on the cushion divan.

One glance at the long envelopes and Eve knew what they were. Bird, too, was looking at them as though he knew what they were. Eve tried to divert his attention by saying gushingly.

"Awfully glad to see you, Mr. Bird. Asleep when you rang. Dead tired. Down town all day."

But Stanley was not to be diverted. "Who's been writing all that stuff? Some of your gems?"

"Yes, they are mine," she cried. "But you shan't see them." She put out her hand and covered the pile.

"Far be it from me to wade through those Parnassian bogs! When'd you send them out?"

This was too much for Eve. The tears came, and she didn't even try to hold them back.

"Gee, I'm sorry," said Stanley, looking as awkward as a truck horse.

Eve sobbed and swallowed and felt very unromantic, blowing her nose and reddening her eyes before Stanley Bird of all men.

"I don't care — you can't tell me it's not pull. The whole thing's pull! I left those stories at *Street & Smith's* before noon, and they simply couldn't have read them and sent them back already! They — they just don't want to find new authors — that's what they don't." She worked herself into such a righteous rage that she actually stamped her foot as though she were still in pinafores.

Stanley came over and put one hand on her shoulder. "Here, now, this won't do. Let's look at the damn' things. I know a jugful about everybody's business but my own, and maybe I can help. Go and bathe your eyes and powder your nose, and then you'll feel better."

Eve did as she was bidden. When she came back, he was busy tearing open the long envelopes.

"Always remember, Miss Kerwin," he began, "nobody gets anywhere without five-finger exercises. And five-finger exercises are things you've got to learn by yourself."

"Well, I've read just about every book on the short story that's been written and I thought I knew exactly how to do it. I still believe it's pull that gets such mess published as I waded through this afternoon in the *Red Book*."

"Now that remark alone would show that you are an amateur of the verdantest green. Very little gets in through pull. Magazines are crazy for new stuff. Good stuff. Let me have a look at yours."

Stanley began on number one of Eve's masterpieces. He read aloud. "*Fifty years ago to-night* —

"That won't do at all, but it was great stuff in the golden 'eighties." He threw number one aside.

"But, Mr. Bird," wailed Eve, "that's a really true story! It happened right next door."

Stanley was unimpressed. "True stories don't make fiction. Give me the next one."

He glanced at manuscript number two, then jumped to his feet with a laugh. "My word, you've got a dream story! This is rich!" He marched up and down the room chuckling. Finally he stopped in front of her and looked at her keenly.

"So, you aren't a famous person, after all! You aren't even an honest person! You are just one grand and glorious bluff!"

Eve felt hot and angry — angry at herself for deceiving, and angry at him for not giving her the chance to explain. And then in her great desire to succeed she mastered her anger and asked in a weak and humble voice: "Won't you help me? I really want to learn."

He looked at her soberly and pulled at an imaginary beard. "Well, I'll make a bargain with you. I'll try for a while and see if you've got it in you — thus far there is no evidence that you have. If I discover nothing more as I proceed, then you've got to promise to take a course in cooking or dressmaking

or scrub-womaning — something that will suit you better. Do you promise? ”

“ Yes, of course, but —— ”

“ Now for gem number three.” He read the first few lines and laid it with the others. “ Ah, ’tis another dream, and the dreamer awakes. It won’t do, my dear. Under no circumstances do they allow dreams in a magazine office.”

Eve missed his meaning and blurted out: “ That’s perfectly absurd, if it’s a surprise. Nobody on earth would have known it was a dream till the very last line! ”

“ I knew it, me child, and I’ve read only the first three.”

“ And *the* next,” he growled: “ ‘ *Once upon a time* ’ — Why do you begin a story at the beginning, Mrs. Hans Andersen? ”

“ And where should I begin? ” she asked in amazement.

“ In the middle, of course. I’ll give you a famous formula for beginning a story: *George Blake rose from his chair, readjusted the gardenia in his button-hole, slammed shut his roll-top desk, and fell dead.* Now hand me that magazine over there.”

He turned the pages slowly, and in about five minutes stopped. “ Here now, I’ll show you why this story sold.”

“ You can’t show me one in there that’s as good

as the worst of mine!" Eve announced. "I've read every story in that number and they're *all* rotten!"

Bird closed the magazine with a bang. "If that's the way you feel about it, then it's no use."

That brought Eve to her senses. "Please tell me what you were going to say," she begged.

"Young woman, you just come down from that sky-scraper and lay your little pink ear to the earth. Indians may be coming!"

He opened the magazine again and read: "*The burglar lay dead at the bottom of the well.*"

"Trash!" murmured Eve.

"Perhaps, but it gets your interest!"

"Not mine!" she insisted, and turned bored eyes to the window.

"Well, Miss Low-high-brow, you're not the American public and, believe me, that's the god you'll have to serve unless you're great like Conrad. Then people will read you even if they don't know what you're driving at."

"I'd rather scrub floors."

"All right, I'll give you your first job. My studio looks like hell." He walked leisurely up and down the whole length of the room.

She stopped him midway in one of his journeys. "I'm a conceited fool, Mr. Bird, and I *will* listen to you if you'll tell me what to do. But frankly now, in that *Street & Smith* office, did they read my stories?"

"They didn't have to, Miss Kerwin. One line was enough to show them you didn't belong. That doesn't mean that you can't belong. You've got as good a chance as any other boob. If I were you I'd sign up for a correspondence course and whack away for a year and find out all I could about short stories. Ten to one you'll sell eventually, that is, if you have anything to say, and I think you have. If I'm in the neighborhood at the time, and I find you haven't, I'll see that you learn to make bread and boil potatoes. Everybody doesn't have to be a writer, you know!"

"But I have something to say!" She spoke with such conviction that Bird very nearly believed her.

After a pause he said: "You know, Miss Kerwin, when I listened to your talk last night I thought your name was already in the Hall of Fame, and after I got home I wondered why I had never heard of you. Then it dawned on me that you were only another one of those poor devils who laugh to keep from crying."

They both turned to the window and stood there, side by side, thinking the same thoughts and looking with the same unseeing eyes on the view before them. The lights on the island blazed and twinkled, and the clumsy mud-scows crept by.

Marj's miniature grandfather clock chimed eight.

"Come, Miss Kerwin, let's go up to the gallery

and see *Fanny's First Play* — that is, if you've got fifty cents to spare?"

Eve reached for her little red pocket-book. "Of course I have!"

"Well," he said, with mock seriousness, "so have I — just fifty!"

CHAPTER VIII

ALL during the play Stanley was bursting with chuckles. There was no denying that it was a clever performance, but Eve, being a female of exaggerated practicality, was thinking far more of the proximity of her escort's arm. It was warm and comforting. She leaned against it ever so daintily. There came a sudden response from his elbow. She was not entirely inexperienced, yet she wanted to assure herself that his answer was not a mistake. So she leaned again. This time his hand crept over and covered hers where it lay on the arm of the seat.

After that, during all the dark times in the theatre, his hand sought hers. Always as the lights flashed on at the end of each act their hands flew apart, and Eve, at least, sat back thrilled with the drama of her own affairs.

All sorts of sweet, dizzy thoughts went sizzling in her brain. She was going to fall in love, and she knew it. Perhaps she already was in love! Yes, she was. She was sure she was!

He would be a difficult man. There was no denying that. Yes, he would be hard to manage, but

that, after all, was one reason why he attracted her. Quite definitely, at the end of the second act, she decided to make him her husband. . . .

Afterward, when she thought it all over, she couldn't remember whether they rode back or walked, but she did remember distinctly that they found Marj still up, sewing, and that she pitched her work aside and made them some hot chocolate.

Stanley drank his first cup hurriedly, and Marj poured him another.

"Aw, you didn't leave any room for sugar!" he complained, "and I like sugar!"

Then without any change of tone, he continued. "Why does Eve Kerwin wear corsets?"

Marj doubled up with screams of laughter. "Stanley, you are the most irrelevant thing! To answer you in proper sequence, I know you like sugar and all people in Port Illington wear 'em!"

He turned to Eve. "Is that your real reason, Eve Kerwin?"

"Well, not exactly. First of all, without corsets my clothes wouldn't fit. So I have to wear them if I don't want to wobble like a duck."

"That's because you don't know how to dress. Look at Marj!"

To exhibit her better, Stanley lifted Marj from her chair and stood her on her feet.

"Yes, *do* look at Marj!" said Eve, with a great show of sarcasm. "Together, we weigh one hun-

dred and fifty-six pounds, and Marj weighs at least six of them all by herself!"

"What if she does, Miss Smarty? All I want to tell you is this: Marj would know how to dress without corsets if she were a baby elephant."

"Which, of course, means that I'm a baby elephant!" said Eve, pretending to pout. "Well, I'm not! I weigh only three pounds more than I ought to!"

"Why do you?" asked Stanley. He pointed the finger of pride at his own bosom. "I weigh thirty-five pounds less than I ought to!"

Eve suddenly felt an ambition more consuming than any she had ever known in her life: to find those thirty-five pounds and return them to him. She pictured herself with a great chunk of fat, sticking a piece on here, a piece on there, much the same as sculptors add noses and ears and cheeks. She saw herself smoothing him off with her thumb until he became the well-rounded image his enormous height suggested he should be.

"If I were your mother!" — Eve shook her finger at him — "I'd stuff you till you got that thirty-five pounds! Skeletons needn't be so haughty!"

She darted off to the kitchen and soon returned with a huge slice of bread, buttered on both sides. "Now, eat that! Use this fork or you'll get yourself all slippery!"

Stanley ate the bread and butter deliberately, and then looked up at Eve, who was still towering above him.

"You're a nice mother person, Eve, aren't you?"

Marj gathered up her sewing. "This is no place for a respectable chaperon," she said and gently shut herself in the little room.

"Well, you *are* a mother person, aren't you, Eve?" he repeated.

"I don't know what I am, but I do know that you can't be well unless your nerves have little fat cradles to lie in."

Stanley got up and walked to the window. "My nerves are never still long enough to lie anywhere. They're scraping and scratching like a flock of chickens all the time."

Eve followed him and put her hand on his shoulder. "Won't you let me help you, Mr. Bird — Stanley, won't you let me encourage you back to your work? I'd lots rather do that than be successful myself."

"Oh, I can't work! Hang it all, I *can't* work!"

Eve took his big hand in hers and coaxed him over to the couch, just as you lead a resisting child into something that you know he really longs to do.

"Why can't you work? Come, tell me all about it — it'll do you good to talk. Let's sit down here on the couch and see what can be done."

"Aw, what's the use bothering you with my

troubles? I'm a failure and a mess, and there's an end to the argument."

"But you're not a failure and a mess. You're just discouraged temporarily. Can't you sell what you draw?"

Perhaps in the interest that she felt for him was a dash of that insane passion that we all feel to run other people's affairs. Perhaps it was just the re-awakening of that earlier emotion to gather him up to her bosom and keep him there for ever.

He laughed piteously. "Sell! Why, I can sell every damn' line that I draw! The trouble is, I can't draw! I can't see its worthwhileness any more. Why should I sit down and work myself to death over a lot of puny stuff just to make a fat capitalist chuckle! God! I can't see anything any more but Socialism!"

"Why don't you work for Socialism, then?"

"That's what I am doing, and I'm starving at the job. What's more, I'm not even doing that well. But what do you know about all this? You're not a Socialist, nor anything else that I can see. You don't know a blessed thing about life! If you did you'd see at a glance that I was a dead failure!"

"You're — you're not!"

She wanted to say more, but tears choked her.

He took her in his arms and held her tightly.

"There, there, dear! Don't you go crying over

me, whatever you do! I'm not worth it! I'm not worth the salt in those tears, and salt is just five cents a bag!"

CHAPTER IX

ONE morning a week later Eve went marketing on First Avenue. Stanley was coming to luncheon! Stanley was coming! Stanley! She purchased two net reticules full of chops and salad, and milk, cheese, bread, butter, carrots, peas and cauliflower. Ha! She'd soon gather together those thirty-five missing pounds! To-day's luncheon would mean two at least.

She scraped the carrots, shelled the peas, washed the salad, turned the cauliflower head down in a bowl of water. The waste from her vegetables filled a dish pan to the brim.

"Great Cæsar," she thought, "more to throw away than there is to eat! Regular withered city trash!"

Then she put the carrots and peas on to cook. In the bottom of Marj's cupboard she found some Irish potatoes. "Fattening!" she whispered gleefully, putting them on the toaster to bake beside the carrots and peas.

She arranged the table prettily with brown mounds of whole-wheat bread, crackers, cake, cheese, celery. Then when everything was ready and she was light-

ing the oven for the chops, there came a knock at the door that made her heart leap excitedly.

It was exactly twelve o'clock. She hadn't expected him so soon. She had even secretly feared that he might forget to come at all.

"I'm terribly glad to see you!" she said, welcoming him with both hands.

The big blond boy laughed self-consciously, pushed his soft, frayed cuffs into his sleeves, and made a desperate attempt to keep the collar of his ill-fitting coat in place.

"How nice you look!" Eve said, admiringly.

"I ought to look nice. I did my best. I bathed and shaved and brushed my clothes and cut my molasses hair as far back as I could reach. I've left the rest for you to do." He laughed again and handed her the scissors from a pile of Marj's sewing.

"But I've never cut anybody's hair in my life! I don't know how to begin!"

"Well, you just cut! Here! Jump up on this chair so that you can see what you're doing."

Eve scrambled up, and Stanley shouted: "Now then: one, two, three!"

Eve timidly snipped off a great yellow chunk, and dropped it on the floor.

He looked at it a little dubiously. "You might go a little easier next time, and don't cut all in one spot."

Then Eve grew courageous and clipped and

snipped with great assurance. At last she said, "Now, that's the very best I can do!" and jumped down from the chair.

Stanley viewed himself in the long mirror between the windows. He shook his head dejectedly. "You'd never make your living as a lady hair-cutter. Now I'll have to wait till it all grows long again before I dare face a barber. He'd say: 'Wife been cutting your hair?'" Then he laughed till he shook all over — that soundless laugh which she had noticed before.

"Laugh out loud!" cried Eve, pretending to tickle him. "Open your mouth wide and howl! I heard you do it once!"

So he did open his mouth and he did laugh out big and loud, but shaky like an infant trying to walk for the first time.

"Well, bless its heart, it has a laugh — course it has, only it was afraid to let its mamma hear it! Now come into the kitchen with me and help me forward march the vegetables."

He tried his best to be of assistance, but he was more of a hindrance than a help. His large, clumsy body got in her way at every turn.

At last the feast was ready, and they sat down at the little round table. He ate what she placed before him like a healthy, hungry child. Every time he looked out the window Eve slipped more vegetables on his plate and more milk into his glass. The more

she gave him the more he ate, until at last she thought to herself: "His legs really must be hollow!"

Apropos of nothing he blurted out: "Why do you wear silk blouses? If you'd kept up with the Paterson silk strike I don't believe you'd ever wear silk on your body again. Why, when those poor devils gave that demonstration in Madison Square Garden there were women and men, with babies in their arms, that had walked all the way from Paterson to New York City and most of them hadn't had a bite of food for three days. Heroism! Why, they stumbled and fell all along the way, but three thousand of them managed to get there. God! I wouldn't wear an inch of silk for a seat in heaven!"

Eve's back began to ache. What had she to do with all these terrible things that he talked about?

"Would you rather I didn't wear silk?" she faltered. "I never thought of the misery that's woven into it."

"It's nothing to me what you wear, only I can't understand how a girl like you would want to sport expensive clothes while three-fourths of the world goes hungry."

"Please don't be angry with me," she begged. "I don't understand about things yet. Tell me what I ought to wear and I'll wear it."

"A cotton sailor-blouse and a wool skirt, and no corsets. Ugh! How I hate a woman in corsets!"

Eve left him excavating a mountain of whipped

cream that concealed a sponge cake, and hurried into the bedroom.

Presently she returned, dressed in a sailor-blouse and a checked skirt. Grey deer-skin sandals covered her feet.

Stanley rose so suddenly that he dropped his knife and fork on the floor.

"Now I like you," he said. "This way you're human. I hope you'll never have fine clothes again, at least not till the *Good Day* comes, then maybe you won't be the only one to wear them."

Eve was all warm inside with his approval. How splendid he was! How noble he was! The only life worth living was a life with a purpose. His life had a purpose. Everything he said thrilled her exquisitely. But being young and full of healthy appetite, she sat down on her side of the table to finish her sweet before she proceeded with her education.

Stanley piled up dishes and followed her back and forth to the kitchen, bumping into her at every turn and spilling things on the way. He was so awkward that at last she made him sit down on the couch with the *New York Times*.

"Damned capitalist sheet!" he said, throwing it on the floor.

Eve smiled at his petulance — it was so childish. Next she offered him Walling's something-or-other

on Socialism. The pages were uncut, and he occupied himself cutting them until Eve returned.

"Now, I want to talk to you, Stanley, and I don't want you to read while I'm doing it. I want you to look straight at me because I'm serious."

He looked straight at her.

"What work have you done to-day?"

"None," he answered.

"What yesterday?"

"None!"

"Why?"

"I can't work, I tell you. I'm too unhappy and lonely to work. I want to be a tramp. I'm a failure, I tell you, and I'll never try again." His face went down into his hands and he sighed heavily.

Eve knelt before him and took his two hands into her own. He drew back suddenly, but she clung to him and whispered. "Let me help you."

"What can you do? You take my advice and stay out of this. You'll get your fingers burned."

"I don't care what happens to me," she whispered. "I've had a vision!" Her eyes were alight, and her hands trembled as they closed more tightly over his.

"Please, Eve, don't kneel down here in front of me — I'm nothing to kneel to!" He tried to pull her to her feet.

"No, let me kneel. I've never been as happy. I want to help. Now listen to me: I think I love you."

If it isn't love, it's better. I have one thousand dollars. We can marry, take a two-room flat, and live on that till you're started again. I don't care if I never learn to write if I can only help you back into your work. Your work is the big thing to me — *your* work! Not my work!"

He looked at her aghast, staring like a stricken animal that sees shelter but is unable to reach it.

She pleaded again: "If you're a failure and a tramp as you say you are, then it doesn't much matter whom you marry. Perhaps you don't care for me, but if I only ask you to risk what you are now, then all that I make you into will be mine! And I know it will be something big and fine! Won't you trust me?"

Stanley drew her, still kneeling, close up to him and stroked her hair. Then he kissed her, and the tears began to roll down his face.

"I haven't anything to offer you, dear girl, but failure. Most likely I'll never have anything to offer you but failure. I have big, brave ideas, but they all die!"

"But they won't die, Stanley, if I care for them." She pressed her face close to his breast and wept quietly.

He kissed her hair again and again. . . .

Later they talked about wedding rings being a relic of barbarism and the indissoluble marriage a bygone superstition. Then he gathered her all up

to him again and whispered: "Yours for the Revolution!" And she clung and whispered back: "Yours for the Revolution!"

And when he was gone she crept into bed and dreamed that she had exchanged her one thousand dollars for bread and butter and filled a flat with it and turned him in to feed, and once every night she went to see that he was well covered with warm blankets so that he wouldn't get cold while he slept.

CHAPTER X

THEY went over to Hoboken, and in ten minutes' time a justice of the peace had married them.

Eve kept her own name, not because she wanted to, but because, as a modern radical young woman, she felt she had to. Moreover, Marj insisted that it was the only thing to do nowadays, as of course one always married again and again, and an everlasting shifting of names was inconsiderate and mixy for the public.

Marj was in a fever of excitement over the furnishing of the three-dollar-and-seventy-five-cents a week flat that the young couple selected for their home. She made all her friends give what they could spare from their possessions.

Her own contributions were two wool blankets and two cotton ones. Someone gave a bed, and someone else lent two Windsor chairs and a kitchen table. Then, with a bit of taffeta here and a splash of cretonne there, a bucket of paint and some stencils, the two drab little rooms overlooking the roofs were soon turned into an interior decorator's dream.

The gas stove was in the living-room, and so were the stationary wash-tub and sink. But Marj — oh,

the genius of Marj! — she covered them over with two golden India prints, and Sherlock Holmes himself would never have suspected them.

In defiance of cheap real estate announcements and cheaper furniture stores, the Shepherd named the new home *The Nest*. He painted the two words on a white enamelled board which he nailed on the door.

The Shepherd was much excited over *The Nest*. He contributed a Soken Yamaguchi print for the living-room wall and a huge fishskin lantern for the corner. Then, by wiring the lantern, he succeeded in flooding the room with a soft, unearthly moon-glow that turned it into a sort of Chinese fairyland.

When everything was in apple-pie order, Marj took Eve's money, bought quantities of food, and then sent out invitations for a house-warming.

By eight o'clock on the night appointed the guests began to arrive.

First came the painter man and the sculptor man from the tenements across the way, and behind them Mr. Mullins, the painter man's huge collie, who purred like a cat and thought he was a lap-dog. Mr. Mullins occupied the entire flat until Marj asked him to sit on guard over the space of floor that was under the cot.

Then came an over-the-roof writer whose eyes were brown and deep like velvet — cut velvet, someone had said. He stood in the doorway, dark-

skinned and tall. In his hands was a Chien Lung bowl — his contribution to *The Nest*.

“Oh, isn’t it a love!” screeched Marj, jumping up and down and running her thin forefinger along the raised houses and animals that inhabited its sides. “Such blue! Did you ever see such blue?”

Eve admired it and Stanley was silent, and the painter man and the sculptor man discussed it in terms of art. Then they all discovered that there was no place to put it.

Marj gave a little yelp of joy, poked her key into the Shepherd’s hand, and pushed him out on the landing. “She can use my little Swiss bracket!”

“Where is it?” sighed the weary Shepherd. By actual count he had already made sixty-five trips over the roof to Marj’s flat. Marking sixty-six on a little white paper that was pinned to the door-jamb, he moaned and asked again:

“Where is it, Marj?”

“In the right-hand back corner of the box-couch, Silly! As if you didn’t see me put it there your very own self!”

The Shepherd went and the Shepherd came, but there was no Swiss bracket in his hand, and Marj, at first reproachful and then apologetic, decided that it was behind the bread-box near the dill-pickle jar.

They nailed the bracket high up on the west wall in a light that caught the blue of the little bowl and made it gleam like a gem.

Then, when it was placed to the satisfaction of everybody, the blind musician came, and it had to be taken down again so that he might see it with his fingers.

The last arrival was Myra, the little bob-haired girl who was going in for education. She flung herself disconsolately on the cot and groaned.

"Just what is the tragedy this evening, Myra?" asked the painter man sympathetically.

"Aw, nothing; only going back to high school when your brain cells have gone dry makes you feel like a calcium when the wires are cut."

"Well, then, why do you go back? Ain't you smart enough? You certainly used to hold down a good job."

"No, I *ain't* smart enough! And I hate a good job! It's too hard to find another one. Anyway, you think I want to be a stenog. all my life?"

"Well, teaching's no cinch either."

"Better'n typewriting. You're the boss and you can smack the kids when you're mad." Just then the big dog came out from under the cot and rubbed himself against her knees. "Mr. Mullins, stop it! You make as many unnecessary moves as a taxi driver! Stop it, I tell you! You're all fleazy! Get away!"

The painter man backed Mr. Mullins under the cot again and asked: "Why don't you get married?"

"Who to?" She fairly bit off the words. "The

only men worth talking to are loafers, and loafers make bum husbands!"

Marj, who had permitted Myra to hold the stage long enough, burst into the conversation. "Here, you! Quit sympathizing with Myra! Calamity Myra — that's what she is, and this, I'm here to tell you, is a festive occasion!"

Marj held up a high-ball. "Here's to *The Nest*, and here's to the newlyweds — may they have many troubles and be sorry ever after!"

"Bravo!"

"Three cheers!"

"Speech, Stanley, speech!"

Stanley rose and addressed his guests. "Well, I'm just going to say the goll-derndest old-fashion-est thing I know how to say. This is the happiest day of my life, and I mean every word of it. I've just married the best woman ever, and we're both going to do our share toward remaking this poor old world. I never realized the power that was in me till I met Eve Kerwin, and now I feel like a regular Consolidated Electric Light Company! From this day on there'll be no more dawdling in my life. Just plain everyday *doing* — that's my programme and that's how I'm going to make my dreams come true!"

Mr. Mullins crawled out, sat up on his hind legs, and howled.

Everybody laughed but Myra. "See," she wailed,

“even Mr. Mullins doubts the truth of your statements. He says there ain’t no such animal as happiness.”

“’Deed you’re mistaken,” said the painter man. “Mr. Mullins is saying: ‘Hear, hear!’ like a regular House of Lords. You gotta understand a dog’s technique same as a human’s.”

“Make him go away!” whined Myra. “I hate dogs and dreams! I’m going home.”

“Myra,” Marj scolded, “you’re a regular old sinker! Drink a cocktail and come up to the surface.”

Everybody crowded around the table and drank punch and ate sandwiches and made speeches, and then, when there was no more to eat and drink, everybody said good night and trudged home.

Eve and Stanley stood with their arms about each other looking out into the night. They squeezed their cheeks against the window-pane and slanted their eyes to the left for what they called “their view” of the river.

It wasn’t much of a view, but still they loved “their” river. To see it better they went up to the roof and hung over the parapet. There they got the full sweep of its wide, grey beauty.

All the chimneys of Manhattan sloped away from them in silent miles. The boats stole up the river and the boats stole down the river and one that was very big blinked its bright eyes at them.

Eve shivered and pressed against her husband.

"What is it, dear?"

"I was thinking of the time when I didn't have you."

"Well, that's silly, because people who haven't troubles never know how to appreciate them. You have me now, you little Piggy-wig, and I have you for ever and ever and ever and ever."

"Ugh, that's a long time!" Eve laughed. "Aren't you afraid of getting awfully bored?"

"I'll take long vacations when it looks threatening."

"No, you won't!" she declared, and clung more closely to him. "You won't want to. But tell me now: aren't you glad I was a direct actionist and asked you to marry me?"

"Well, ra-ther. You see, I couldn't ask you to marry me because *you* had the thousand dollars! Really, dear, your asking me was just the beautiful-est thing on earth. Just exactly what I needed: love and encouragement. Eve dear, we're going to give the whole wide world something to gossip about."

"I forbid you to use the word *gossip* in connection with my husband!" She pretended to box his ears and then kissed them. "You must say we'll give the whole world something to sing a cantata about or something to write an epic about. That's better, isn't it?"

“Better? You wonderful little woman, it’s an inspiration! I’ll make my whole life one heroic poem for your sake!”

“And, Stan,” she whispered, “when folks say how wonderful your work is, I’ll thrill warm inside because I’ll know that I’m the silent partner.”

“And, Eve, dear, when folks say: ‘Mr. Bird, how did you ever create such pictures?’ I’ll answer: ‘May I present my wife?’”

CHAPTER XI

STANLEY spoke his contempt for curtains, so there were none. The windows thrown wide open for air let in the long, slanting rays of a hot afternoon sun. All day the heat had been unbearable, but now at last a timid breeze began to blow across the city.

At the centre table Eve was packing a pasteboard box. Stanley, with his huge shoulders humped, stood watching her.

She carefully folded a glittering blue taffeta under clouds of chiffon and laid it on top of something soft and pink.

"As much as I hate these fine clothes, Eve, I can't bear seeing you give them away," Stanley said, throwing himself down on the cot and burying his face in a cushion. "Seems exactly like dead people and a coffin."

Eve stopped her packing and went over to him. "You mustn't think I want them ever any more, dear. I don't. You've shown me things so much bigger and better than pretty clothes."

Stanley put his arms about her.

Love is mighty and intangible, and there has never

been one word in any language big enough to express its thrill.

The courtship of Stanley and Evelyn had been so short and serious that they had had no time for what they called the billing and cooing of silly lovers. But now not even they could longer resist the power of the "little language." Who can? It was invented in the Garden of Eden, and ever since then each pathetic little Adam has been struggling to tell some pathetic little Eve the same thing: "I love you."

Evelyn sat close to Stanley whispering lovely nothings into his ear. But Stanley lay immovable and silent.

"I tell you, sweetheart, I couldn't wear silks and satins now that I know how they're made. Please, please, dear, don't feel unhappy. Think of my frivolous cousin Betty, twirling about in them. She'll be the happiest girl in Madison."

They sat there silent, with their arms about each other, till the dark came down and obscured the last chimney pot in the grey district.

With his fingers automatically smoothing her hair back from her temples, he was probably dreaming great pictures: Dew-witches spun of silver drops; star-lighters made of wishes; fairy godmothers wrought of coppery gold. Eve, happy in his nearness, was making mental lists of cabbages, beets, butter, and eggs.

She got up from the cot rather suddenly and stretched her arms.

"Evelyn!" he said sharply. He always called her Evelyn in reproof. "Please don't jump up like that without telling me. It upsets me terribly — just as though you slammed a door in my face!"

"Stan, dear, I'm awfully sorry. I got fidgety sitting still so long. Then I remembered that we have nothing in the house for supper and nothing for to-morrow, and to-morrow's Sunday. There's heaps of marketing to do."

"We don't need anything to-morrow. Brown bread and butter is good enough for anybody!" He turned his face to the wall.

Eve sat down by his side and began coaxing him as she would a sulky child. "Stan, dear, you haven't had a breath of outdoors to-day. Come along — there's a good lamb. We'll go for a nice walk. All the hucksters are out on First Avenue, and you know they make pictures in your mind. Won't you come?"

He got up suddenly and splashed around in the bathroom. Eve found his hat for him, got the two big net bags down from the hook on the closet door, and they started out together.

As they reached the street he asked petulantly: "Why don't you say something?"

"I was afraid of disturbing your picture, dear.

You know you once told me that you like to get the first glimpse of the outside in silence."

"You've got a good memory for *some* things, Eve!" Then, without warning, he left her, dashing off towards the little Branch Library and shouting back that he preferred it to pedlars' carts.

"All right, dear," she said, "I'll come for you when I've finished shopping."

On First Avenue she bought an enormous cabbage, two heads of lettuce, and Irish and sweet potatoes. Then at the butcher's shop she got butter and second-quality eggs and half a pound of chopped beef. It was the cheap kind made out of scraps; but it was fresh, and she knew how good it would taste when it was fried quickly with plenty of fat to make it brown and crisp.

The two net bags grew heavier and heavier, and the weight of them pulled at her shoulders, but she struggled on down the Avenue to see if she could buy anything else that was cheap and palatable.

"Rice!" she said to herself. "I forgot rice." She bought the broken kind at the disorderly little Jewish store on the corner at a saving of six cents a pound.

She found Stanley sitting outside the Library on the stone steps. "They haven't got a book worth reading!" he told her shortly. Then, as he took the bags out of her hands, he demanded: "Why did you buy so much?"

"That isn't too much, dear. At any rate, it hasn't cost much. Money goes far when you market this way."

At the mention of money he glared at her savagely. "Why are you always talking about money?"

She smiled up at him bravely. "Because I'm learning to be a wonderful haus-frau!"

"'Tisn't that. It's because you love money!" He laughed as though he had scored a point. Then he carelessly swung both bags over his shoulder.

"Careful! Eggs!" she cried.

He looked at her reprovably. "How often do I have to tell you not to raise your voice, Evelyn? Suppose the eggs do get smashed?"

"I'm sorry," she murmured. "But it would be so awful to throw away twenty-five cents!"

Then, as usual, after a streak of unkindness, Stanley began to soften. He smiled down at her with a half-wink in his eye and said: "We'll have plenty of money. Don't you worry, little lady. You stick by me and I'll show you. I've got a whale of an idea for a new sort of illustrating and it'll go big. Don't you worry — time is all I need, just a little time for developing things."

And Eve, always resilient, grew calm again and her throat relaxed. Laughing together, they skipped up the five flights of stairs to *The Nest*.

Stanley seated himself at the window, notebook in hand, and sketched page after page. Every page

as he finished it he would tear off and crumple into his pocket.

Eve pulled out the little folding table, stretched its legs, and set it daintily for supper.

She washed the salad, took the bottle of milk from under the cold water faucet, peeled the silver paper from the cheese, boiled some potatoes with their jackets on, fried the meat, and when all was ready called her lord to the feast.

"I'm going to work to-night, Eve, dear. It's taken me a long time to plan out that comic series. Editors make me laugh — think they don't want anything too new! Well, you watch 'em! I'll block out the first six to-night. Stuff ought to run along for months. Awfully good idea, Eve. You see, I'm going to run comics that fit into the day of the week. Nobody does that. They all just have comics regardless of fit. 'Rainy Sundays,' — can't you see 'em? 'Wash Mondays,' 'Ironing Tuesdays.' You see, it won't only be about the home, but this damned regularity in people's households affects even business. You know yourself how it affects meals and comforts. Think of a woman having wash-day at the end of the week instead of at the beginning! Why, it simply can't be done."

Stanley stuffed a large uncut lettuce leaf into his mouth, leaving a generous smear of cottonseed oil and vinegar on his chin.

"I'll run these things for a living and we'll do the big stuff for fame."

Eve loved to hear him say "we." It made her feel helpful to him, and that was what she longed to be above everything else in the universe.

"That's fine, Stan. I'll trot into the other room and shut the door so that you won't be disturbed." She felt so happy she was afraid she'd weep.

Stanley had made a million notebook sketches but he hadn't even unpacked his drawing-board since their marriage, and Evelyn, so afraid of not waiting for the psychological moment, had never alluded to the fact. It was her secret plan not to urge him, but just to be there to applaud when the miracle happened.

After supper she moved about in a seventh heaven of expectation, clearing the table and quietly stacking the dishes in the sink.

She didn't wash a single dish. She didn't even turn the cold water on the butter and milk. They could spoil for all she cared so long as Stanley was working.

Out of the big box under the cot she got his drawing-board. Then putting thumb-tacks, paper, pencils, ink, and crayons within easy reach, she crept off into the other room and closed the door.

She lifted the shoe-box out of the closet and made a low stool of it, so that she could sit with her ear at

the keyhole. "Scratch, scratch," went the pen across the smooth surface of the paper.

"I knew I could do it! I knew it!" she whispered. Tears ran down her cheeks, and all the pent-up rivers of happiness in her soul overflowed.

Towards midnight she heard him walk about the room and then throw himself down on the cot. He was resting. Cramped and stiff from her long vigil, she rose and softly lifted the shoe-box back into place on the closet floor.

She hadn't been able to see through the keyhole what he was actually drawing, but she knew it was wonderful. Come to think of it, she never had quite understood those great dreams of his, but the comics were clear enough, and the comics meant bread and butter and home. Those great dreams — she wondered sometimes if he understood them himself. . . .

But this — this was sweet, everyday reality. The whole sacred security of their lives together stretched out ahead in one long, shining road. She bowed humbly before its loveliness, almost afraid to cross the threshold and lay hold of it.

Once more she sang in her heart: "The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold!" but this time it was a song of victory for Stanley. For her, too, because there was something glorious that awaited her once Stanley's success was assured. They had planned for it together. They had bought its layette a thousand times out of the windows at

Best's. They had even picked out its University and put it up at its father's fraternity. . . .

Thrilled with the fulfilment of every glorious hope in life, Eve tiptoed across the threshold to her husband. . . .

Over the big white paper were hundreds of unintelligible scratches, and on the cot was Stanley sobbing convulsively with his face buried in his arms.

A great unseen mallet struck Eve on the head, and that part of her brain that was meant for happiness went numb.

She sat down beside her husband and put her face close to his. If only she, too, could weep perhaps her eyes would not feel so hot and dry.

"It wouldn't come! It wouldn't come!" he sobbed. She put her mother arms tightly about him and said: "It doesn't matter, dear, it doesn't matter!" But her voice sounded strange in her own ears as though it came from a cavern somewhere far off.

"I'm a failure! I'll never do anything! Why didn't you let me alone where I was? I want to go away! I want to die!"

Presently she coaxed him up to the roof where he could see the great pictures again: where the sky was the black breath of God; where the grey river squirmed and wriggled like the snake that drank the ocean; where the dark roofs were inquisitive giants with silly chimney-pot heads; where the whole

world stretched out before them to be conquered — the whole world, big and hard, but inspiring.

At last he put his arms about her. “This’ll pass, Eve. I’ll show ’em yet! It’s in me, girl, if I weren’t just so afraid and nervous. You’ll stay and help me, won’t you, Eve? I need you!”

“Yes, Stanley, darling. I’ll stay and help if — if you need me.”

CHAPTER XII

THE summer spent itself and autumn came, but Stanley made no more pilgrimages to his drawing-board.

Eve waited tensely by his side, and while she waited her own old ambition began to stir to life. At first it was a poor little starveling, and she refused to notice it. But it grew lusty and strong and at last she acknowledged it as her own, and gave it the sunniest room in the house of her brain.

Her thoughts on the subject were choppy and disconnected: "It won't interfere with him. I'll help just the same. I must. I thought it was dead. It isn't. If I had been able to make him succeed it might have died — but it's alive — all alive — my old desire to do something — to be somebody!"

For the next few weeks she stole away by herself to public parks, to libraries, to her own room, and studied the pages of magazines — all grades of magazines, even down to the poorest.

She tore plots apart and fitted them together again. She manufactured plots of her own similar to those she dissected. Finally, she was able to discover the

human quality in the poorest story in the cheapest periodical.

In her secret excitement she forgot to be practical and unhappy. All her grey heaven burst into reddening sunsets again.

And then one morning Stanley's manner showed a peculiar poise. He went straight to his drawing-board and by early afternoon had finished a cartoon and a five hundred word essay. Without speaking, he took them both and hurried off.

At five he returned with a kiss for Eve's lips and twenty-five dollars for her hand.

"See what my soul storm did for me last summer, Eve! Sunned up the mouldy corners! I sold it to the *American* and told them I had to have the money now."

Eve hugged him joyously. "Stan, dear, if you'll do this every week we — we can have one and send it to Yale, too, when it's grown! Wouldn't it be wonderful?"

He held her close. "We ought to have one even if we can't afford it. That's the trouble with you, darling, you're too practical. You see too far ahead. These people in this neighborhood have one a year and they eat, too."

"But not lamb chops!" She laughed, patting his cheek. "I have a lamb chop standard for children!"

"Well, you old sweet silly, they won't need lamb chops for at least two years, and by that time we'll

be — what do they call it? — rolling in wealth! I've shown you I can make these fellows buy what I draw! Let's not be too conservative!"

"All right, if you'll sell one a week for a month I'll feel we're safe. Oh, Stan, dear, I want one so much—I don't mean one drawing, I mean twelve babies, or as many as in a whole orphan asylum, with all the other women looking on and envying me!"

Eve affected a rollicking song and tucked her stories away again. They could wait. Everything could wait, now the miracle had happened. Yes, she repeated to herself emphatically, everything could wait. But something deep down in her kept putting the question: "Why should everything wait?"

In the dark silence of each night she tried to analyze her emotions. Did she really want to write? Well, perhaps her ego did, but her heart wanted quite another career. Why couldn't she have both? Probably she could, but not just now with Stanley's success at the turning-point. Wasn't she, after all, only an ordinary woman with the ordinary set of emotions and desires? Probably she was. Wouldn't home and babies and a husband and the sing-song routine of motherhood satisfy her? She wasn't quite sure. But of one thing she was sure: everything in her must be subordinated to Stanley. She must keep herself in readiness like a Jewish woman who hopes to be mother to the Messiah.

But the miracle never happened again.

Eve's brain developed into a sort of two-story apartment. On the lower floor she kept the butter and eggs and cabbage and chopped meat, and along with them the fact that her thousand dollars was dwindling away. On the upper sunlit floor she kept her love for Stanley and the dream cradles of the twelve babies. On the dark stairway between, she crouched and labored at her stories, hounded by the fear of penury and failure.

For many weeks she labored, grimly determined to save Stanley and herself and their love from destruction. Money must come from somewhere and come very soon.

One afternoon, late in November, she fluttered around the flat like an excited hen, and cackling playfully deposited her brood of six manuscripts on the cot beside her husband.

As usual he was preoccupied. He did not even see her until she stooped and kissed the tip of his nose.

"I wish, Evelyn, you wouldn't come on me like that! I've warned you a thousand times not to be abrupt!"

"You silly old boy, I've been standing here ages and I thought you knew it. I've got a great, huge, elephantine surprise for you. Guess! No? Well, I've finished six stories all by myself! I've worked honestly and faithfully and humbly as you told me

to, and now I want ou to tell me whether they are any good."

He frowned at her petulantly.

"Eve, I was planning a perfectly gorgeous picture, and you ripped my canvas right through the middle!"

"Im terribly sorry, lamby-bird! Do forgive me. I'll never, never do it again!"

"That's what you always say, but you simply have no delicacy. You'd disturb God on the Judgment Day and then say, 'Sorry!'"

He dashed the manuscripts aside and strode up and down the room. Eve stood quietly in a corner and waited for his mood to change.

Four paces this way, four paces that. He muttered to himself, but included her. "We're damned hypocrites — that's what we are! Who are we that someone else should dig the sewers for us? Why aren't we doing some of the dirty work?"

"But we are doing some of the dirty work," Eve insisted. "We cook and wash and iron and clean — that's heaps, isn't it?" She was mother enough to include him in her daily chores and he was man enough to accept her generosity.

"No!" he shouted. "It's not heaps! We're degenerate Romans — that's what we are! Sleeping and eating and making love up here for months! It's got to stop! I tell you, I'm serious! I've got to accomplish something!"

"You'll never accomplish things, dear, if you continue to isolate yourself. You can't sit on top of a sky-scraper and do things for the little people in the street below. You've got to be down on the sidewalk to get in touch with the little people."

"Eve, you are absolutely the most impossible person I have ever met! You never will understand that I won't go among people till I succeed!"

"You're hungry, dear. I'll feed you, and then, please, will you look at my stories?"

He drank his hot chocolate, four cups of it, and then, with a face entirely expressionless, read through her manuscripts.

"Well," he said at last, "you certainly are an example of the feminist movement all right! An absolutely ignorant female, you come to New York determined to conquer in the short-story game — in fact, pretend you have conquered before you've sold a line! There's no use arguing the matter — women's brains and men's brains are different!"

Then the impossible happened: he tore the pages through the middle, tossed them into the waste-paper basket, and laughed in her face.

The next moment his arms were about her, holding her so tightly that she ached — not her soul — her soul was dead — just her body.

"Eve, darling, tell me why I do such things! I'm a million times sorry! I'd give anything to undo that! I didn't mean to hurt you, but, dearest, you

have such energy and you seem so unbreakable that sometimes you nearly drive me crazy. Forgive me! Say you forgive me!"

He kissed her eyes and her nose and both the little warm spots behind her ears.

Of course she forgave him. She even kept on loving him. But deep down in her heart she knew that her feeling for him was no longer mate-love. It had changed to mother-love.

CHAPTER XIII

IF only Eve had had someone to talk to, the hurt in her soul might have healed. But she had no one. Marj was gone — something had happened to her lungs, and in order to take proper care of her the Shepherd had married her and carried her off to a shack in the Adirondacks; and none of the kindly artist folk ever came to *The Nest* now, as it was understood Stanley didn't want people "dropping in."

One evening late in December, when her thousand dollars were about gone, she slipped out and wandered along the river front in the drizzling rain.

The tenement windows were ablaze, and she could see domestic drama going on in many of the curtainless rooms. There a mother was nursing her baby to sleep. Through the next window she watched a man thrashing a woman. Which was the way to live, she wondered, quietly like the nursing mother, or violently like the fighting couple? Did it, could it mend things up for them to beat each other? . . .

She turned and looked over the rock wall into the river. The cold rain beat on her head and ran in little streams from her fingers.

"If only I could mix with the river and be lost like the rain!" she whispered, watching the drops splash like little skiffs, then flatten and disappear. "It would be so easy!"

Then she drew back in a sort of shamed terror as she thought of Stanley waiting through the years for her return.

To shake off the morbidness of her mood she lifted her shoulders squarely and sang the Toreador's song. Soon the great thumping measure brought her courage back. The night, the storm, her tense throat, the sound of her own voice all filled her with a sort of reckless triumph. She lifted her head higher and higher and sang out louder and louder.

Then suddenly she broke into heavy sobs. She staggered blindly forward and almost ran into a man who was just emerging from the shadow of the Recreation Building. She didn't turn and flee, as she would ordinarily have done. Her protective instincts were numbed, and life, as she knew it, could inflict no further hurt.

The man was the first to speak.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Bird! You're in trouble, aren't you?"

The shock of the unexpected encounter had checked Eve's sobs. "Who are you?" she asked helplessly.

"Don't you remember me, Mrs. Bird?"

In the rain-veiled light Eve could only see that he

was tall and dark like a Mexican and that his body was heavy without being fat.

“Do I know you?”

“Of course you know me. I attended your housewarming long ago. I came with my friend, Mr. Mullins. Surely you remember Mr. Mullins!”

“Oh, you are the Painter Man!” Eve cried. “Of course I remember you now, but it’s all so long ago and I’ve seen you only once or twice since. How’s Mr. Mullins?”

To an outsider it would have seemed idiotic for anyone to stand in the rain and ask after a dog. But it didn’t occur to Eve that it was idiotic, and the Painter Man answered in all seriousness:

“Mr. Mullins is boarding in the country. You see, Mrs. Bird, the truth is that five flights of stairs are just a little too many for a person of Mr. Mullins’ years and dignity. Last summer while we were at Cape Cod together we talked the matter over, and Mr. Mullins hinted that if it was all the same to me he would like to stay on at the Cape. So I came home alone.”

It was strange that news of Mr. Mullins should seem so comforting to Eve. She wanted the Painter Man to go on talking about him for ever, for his voice was so kind, so deferential, so courteous, that it was like balm to her wounds.

“You must miss him,” she murmured.

“I do, and I’m sure Mr. Mullins misses me; but,

as I told him in parting, we would both have to learn to get on without each other."

Then, as though he had noticed for the first time that Eve was hatless and that her umbrella was closed and dragging limply in her fingers, the Painter Man said:

"Hadn't you better let me open your umbrella for you?"

"No, thank you. I want the rain to beat down on my head. It feels so nice and cool. You like it yourself!"

"But I'm a man."

The same old thing! Eve answered rather sharply: "That's so different, is it?"

"Only, my child, in the length of the hair!"

Eve laughed in spite of her gloom. "I thought you were going to tell me that women were fragile vessels, and that they have no logic and that their brains weigh less than men's."

"Not at all. Brain has no sex, and, judging by what women go through from the cradle to the crematorium, mere man is no match for them in this business of endurance."

He was talking to her as one human being to another — in fact, quite as frankly and honestly as he was accustomed to talk to Mr. Mullins. No wonder Mr. Mullins adored him!

"It's strange I never see you on the street, Mr.

Painter Man. Do you still live up here in the tenements?"

"Yes, I'm still one of your three thousand neighbors. But it isn't so very strange that you never see me. For a long time you've been walking the streets without seeing very much of anything. That's why I've known that you're in trouble. At night I've often watched you from my windows walking up and down the river front. To-night in the storm I thought it must be you, and from the way you were acting I was afraid something was hurting you very badly. I wondered if I could help you. I talked the matter over with my *alter ego*, and he said: 'By all means, go to her!'"

"Your *alter ego* is very kind, Mr. Painter Man. I am hurt."

"So are we all. It comes from being too certain about life. Life doesn't permit us to be too certain."

"But it's horrible not being certain about things! How can one build up the future without being certain about things?"

"The future doesn't matter — that is, one can't allow it to matter."

He led her over to the stone river wall and they sat down together. For a moment they were silent, then Eve said:

"But I live entirely in the future. Is that wrong? You're wiser and older than I am — please tell me what you think. I'm willing to accept anybody's

viewpoint to-night rather than live any longer with my own."

"It's very foolish, my dear, to live in the future. It makes the Fates angry, and when they're angry they play practical jokes. I've been through every sort of trouble, and now life can't hurt me any more. Once I had what I thought was a great dream — I wanted to set life free; but it seems that life had a greater dream and has set me free."

Eve looked up at his fine calm face and wondered if by any chance he could be Max Beerbohm's Happy Hypocrite. She would find out. If he were, then she, too, would seek out Mr. Aeneas, the fashionable mask-maker, and order a mask that would be fine, calm, and impenetrable. It would indeed be a great comfort not to have one's soul showing all the time like a slovenly petticoat. . . .

"Again, my dear, it's this frightful business of youth that makes you suffer so. I have to look down a long line of years to you — I'm forty. I used to have wild impulses, sudden angers, great socialistic schemes, anarchistic upheavals — world dreams that never work themselves out in the mind of any one man. I saw the ideal commonwealth just around the corner, and it wasn't because I was out of a job, either."

"But most Socialists *are* out of a job," ventured Eve.

"Very naturally, my child. Successful, normal

people never have time to think about what's wrong with the world. They only have time to make the world wrong."

"I'm getting cold, Mr. Painter Man. Don't you think we'd better walk?"

They splashed around in the pools of water up and down the cobbled street. Suddenly he laughed a little friendly laugh.

"Tell me what you are laughing at, Mr. Painter Man."

"I'm laughing at all the people in the world who are trying to settle other people's problems. I'm laughing at you, for you are trying to settle your husband's problems, aren't you? What an impudent child! *His* problem is *his* and *your* problem is *yours*, and, even if this weren't the case, the only way one ever can help another is by just sitting about on call."

It seemed to Eve that he was saying something that was at the bottom of her own mind.

"Then, do you really think I should go ahead and develop myself regardless of him?" She asked it rather breathlessly, as if she hoped that he would agree with her. "It sounds rather dreadful. I thought it was necessary to give my husband my constant attention."

"It probably isn't. People hinder each other, but they seldom help. That's why each person ought to

live alone. Thrusting the machinery of one's life on another is a sort of lesser immorality."

"You've never been married, I see."

"Oh, everyone is married, you know, if not to a wife and children, then to ideas and obsessions."

"But children, I mean real children?" Eve asked the question with a tenderness that women use when there is a baby in the next room. "Mr. Painter Man, have you any really truly children?"

"Oh, perhaps I have, and perhaps I only have brain children," he answered. "And you — do you want real children?"

"Yes — I want real children. They are a sort of glorious hope of mine, but they were much more real before I married than they are now."

He drew her wet arm through his wet arm, and for a few moments longer they walked up and down the dripping water front in a silence that Eve found as comforting as speech.

CHAPTER XIV

As she opened the door the first thing Stanley said was: "What I want to be is a damned capitalist!"

She hurried into the little bathroom and began peeling off one dripping garment after another. "Sounds awfully interesting, Stan," she called back, "but how do you square that with your views on Socialism?"

"Well, all I can say is that under the present system anybody who isn't a capitalist is a damned fool. What I mean is, vote the Socialist ticket if you vote at all, but accumulate all the dirty stuff you can. Nobody'll listen to you if you're poor."

She appeared tying the cord of her bath-robe and threw herself across the cot.

"Well, honey, I've always felt that way, but it rather shocks me to hear it from you."

The door bell rang. Eve reached out and pressed her finger across his lips, whispering. "Milkman! Don't answer! Can't possibly pay him!"

The bell rang again, viciously. Then a piece of white paper was slipped under the door and heavy footsteps stumped off down the stairs.

They waited a moment, then Stanley went to the door and picked up the paper.

He stood blinking at it, bewildered. "Why, Eve, it's an eviction notice!"

She tried hard to steady her voice. "We're two weeks behind, dear."

He sank into a chair and looked at her with eyes full of a terrible pity for himself and for her.

A heavy silence settled on *The Nest*, and Eve lay for a long while quietly looking over the advertisements in the *Times*.

Suddenly she bolted up. "Stan, I'm going on the stage! To-morrow morning I'm going to visit every office in this city." Through all her being vibrated new hope and new joy.

"I'll be doggoned if you will!" He came over and jerked the paper out of her hands. "I'll get a job! You've contributed your thousand and you won't put in another cent!"

She had ceased long ago to be hurt by his tempers. Now they only made her feel more sorry for him.

She asked quietly: "What kind of a job can you get, dear?"

"I don't know. I'll look up and down the list and find something."

She knew he wouldn't, but she answered: "That would be great!"

He grew happy again. His face lighted with the magic of a million new ideas. "Yes, I'll get a job

and we'll get along fine. I'll draw on the side. Yes, siree, I'll get a job if it's only cracking stones!"

Eve crept over and sat on the arm of his chair. "Dearest, I've got something to tell you that I've been hiding. We still have twenty dollars — but just twenty. I was afraid to pay the rent." The hot tears smarted in her eyes. "You go down the first thing in the morning and pay it. We've got to live somewhere. We can't go out into the street."

He put his big arms gently around her and wiped her tears away with his handkerchief. "Eve, darling, don't cry! It'll be all right! This is the best thing that ever happened to me. I've been dreaming like a fool. This'll give me my chance to show you that I am a man. I won't look for a job. My job's right here at my drawing board. I'll make a schedule for work and, by Heck, this time I'll stick!"

He left her side and began to rule off a piece of paper.

After twenty minutes he handed her the completed scheme. It was beautifully lettered, and fantastic illustrations decorated the top and bottom of the sheet.

6 a.m.— Rise — Bath — Short walk — Breakfast.

7 till 10 — Work on Comics.

10 till 12 — Lettering for some advertising office.

Luncheon and walk.

1 till 5 — Illustrating for some publishing house.

Recreation — Supper.

After supper — Designing.

Eve read it enthusiastically. “That’s a peach of an idea, Stan! If you can stick to that you’ll be a capitalist before you know it.”

“Stick!” His tone was scornful. “Maybe you think I won’t stick — you’ve got as much confidence in me as you have in a flea! — but I’ll show you!” He strode angrily into the other room and pinned the schedule over his bed.

Eve had made up her mind long since that Stanley should never accuse her of forcing him into unpleasant situations. She hated women like the heroine in *Martin Eden*. It was criminal to beg a husband or a lover to get a job while his soul was developing.

When Stanley came back, Eve pressed his cheeks with the flat palms of her hands. “I do believe in you, dear!” she said. “I know you are a great man! I knew it the first time I saw you.”

“Now, that’s the way I like to hear you talk! Helps more than anything! You’ve got to believe in me even if the whole world refuses to be such a fool.”

“But I’m not a fool, darling. In all my dreams I see you doing big things. Something has been wrong. Perhaps I have been wrong — I don’t quite know.”

“No, it’s not your fault, dear, except perhaps that your energy scares me a little. It’s my fault, but if

you'll just believe in me this one time more I'll prove things to you!"

Eve pressed close to him. "I do believe in you, Stanley, I do believe in you! I'll get along on the wee-est bit of money — you know I can, if you'll just put down on paper those magical things you have in your brain. Will you, darling, will you?"

The beauty in his eyes lifted her up out of fear, out of poverty, out of everything that was low and sordid and hateful, and once more she stood on the peaks by his side, ready to brave for his sake all life and all death.

But after the lights were out and Stanley was sleeping quietly under his scheme for the morrow, the things the Painter Man had said to her began to eddy around in her brain in little whirlpools of new thought. His voice came back to her, his charming, quiet voice: "You are a capable human being," he had said to her in parting. "Surely there is something big that you can do. Why should you throw your ambition under the heel of anybody, no matter how much you love that body? Even if your stories did seem poor to him, is one's own man a fair critic? Go out! Breathe! Learn! Live!" . . .

At six o'clock the next morning Stanley's alarm clock went off. He picked it up and slung it across the room. It buzzed with life for a moment, then died.

Eve crawled to the foot of the bed and slipped to the floor.

"Why are you getting up, Eve? It's midnight! Don't you ever feel tired?" He growled and turned over.

"It's six, dear, and I've got lots to do to-day. Your scheme says you are getting up at six, too. Better come and eat brekky with me."

"Brekky!" he muttered. "Lord! Baby-talk! Ugh!" He shuddered and hid his head under the pillow.

She bathed and came back into the room. "Stan, honey, you'd better get up. You'll be all mad at yourself if you don't get up when you said you would."

"I'll start the scheme working at seven. I was a nut to figure on six o'clock. Let me alone."

She drank a bottle of milk, dressed herself very carefully, and slipped out into the early morning world to find something to do.

CHAPTER XV

IN a classified telephone directory she looked up theatrical agencies. She copied them down in a long list and then started on her rounds.

There must be something in well-set-upness. The waiting-room in one big agency was so crowded that Eve had to stand. She leaned against the wall and looked from one to another at all the girls and women who were there, like her, looking for an "engagement."

At last the manager opened his sacred door. He bowed agreeably to some, shook his head negatively at many, then catching sight of Eve motioned her to follow him.

In his private office he placed her where the light would fall directly on her face, and asked: "Any experience?"

"Only in an amateur way."

"What do you want?"

"Anything!"

He was a big English-looking person with curly hair parted in the middle. His face had a wrinkled kindliness about it, and when he laughed it was not so much at her as at all her kind.

"Of course, you know there are a million of your brand floating about the offices. You know that most plays are cast in July and August and that it is now January. And of course you know that there are some wonderful actresses out there in that waiting-room who haven't had any breakfast." He said it all in a well-meaning, fatherly way.

Eve's heart thumped. It was true that she had had breakfast, but she wasn't quite sure about luncheon herself. Her breath came so fast as she stood there facing him that she felt it cold on her front teeth. "That — that may all be true, but — I — I came late, and if there wasn't something about me that was unusual, why did you call me in first?" Her words sounded thin to herself, as though they had been squeezed through a very narrow space.

He pointed to a chair. "Please sit down. The very fact that you are frank enough to ask such a question, answers you. You are unusual."

Eve's legs gave way and she sank rather heavily on the hard golden-oak chair.

"You see," he continued, "the stage is getting to be more and more a matter of type. Just now I need a dark woman like you to play a rather fine part as an organ grinder's wife. I'll give you a note to the producer, but I'm afraid your mere lack of technique will bar you out."

"Oh, don't tell him, Mr. Sumner — you are Mr. Sumner, aren't you? I'm not stupid — truly, I'm

not, and maybe I can do it. At least let him find out for himself."

Mr. Sumner laughed. "Oh, he'll find out all right!"

"Take a note," he said to his stenographer, and when it was finished and signed he handed it to Eve saying, "Go over now, and see what happens."

The Broadway manager was the wrong type of Jew — a frightful little toad, as wide as he was high. He smoked a huge cigar and squinted at Eve through jets of smoke that encircled his head. If it hadn't been her business to be gracious, she might have slapped his face.

"Well, she looks the part, don't she, boys?" he croaked, reaching up and patting Eve familiarly on the back. "Here! Read the part! Go on, Jenkins, and be the organ grinder."

How Eve struggled through to the end was a mystery to her. She skipped lines. She read other people's speeches. The Jewish frog glared and jumped at her, but by some miracle she found herself at last down on the street with the typewritten part in her hands. She had been directed to learn as much as possible before the rehearsal at the Brunswick Theatre the next morning.

Up the steps into Mr. Sumner's office she stumbled, and waded through an entirely new mob, but one just as hungry looking.

"Where do they come from, Mr. Sumner?" she

asked, sitting down beside him in his private office again. "They're such a pathetic lot!"

"My dear child, that's the great, unsolvable mystery. They come to New York in July, and they hang on till February with their sad-looking Fourteenth Street suit and their little Woolworth rose pinned on a last year's turban. They trudge up here day in and day out as long as there is any hope. Where they live, no one knows. How they live, no one knows. In March they disappear, nobody knows where. Perhaps back to the farm; perhaps into some great lady's kitchen. Every July, back they flock with the same weary look and the same insatiable ambition. Sometimes one doesn't return. Nobody ever finds out why."

"It's a very dreadful business, Mr. Sumner. I should think you'd hate it."

"I do in a way because I've never succeeded in hardening myself. Just now I'm glad my soft feelings gave you this chance. But don't bank on it — lots of things can happen even to a Broadway star."

On the way home Eve sneaked into a pawn shop and left her gold watch and chain. It must have been a fairly good watch. It brought her ten dollars.

On First Avenue she invested in a pint of milk, a quarter of a pound of butter, some brown bread and a dozen of the best eggs. Everything in her was pounding with happiness as she climbed the stairs with her bundles.

It was brilliant noon. Stanley was still asleep in bed. As she stood there looking at him, she wondered why she wasn't furious. She wasn't. Something had happened in her own life. The thing that she had come to New York to do was looming up big, right in the road ahead. To be sure it wasn't short story writing, but all the arts were sisters, and one could still write short stories when one was a decrepit old woman in a wheel chair.

She stumbled against a table and Stanley turned over and gazed at her. "For the love of Mike, where have you been?" he asked, his fine blond hair shadowing the blue of his eyes. Eve noticed that he was paler and more tired-looking than usual.

She walked over and sat down on the edge of the bed. She didn't kiss him as she would have done before yesterday. Yet it wasn't because she was angry, but because she felt suddenly detached, and detachment makes one forget.

"I've had a wonderful morning!" she breathed enthusiastically.

"Yes!" he snapped. "You always have wonderful mornings! That cruel vitality of yours would make you have wonderful mornings if you were forelady in the cranberry bogs of Jersey! What? Where?"

Eve stared at him a moment as one stares at a strange specimen in a museum. The anger in his

voice had nipped the freshness of her adventure. She proceeded cautiously.

"Well, I decided last night that as story writing had failed, I'd do what I said I'd do — I'd go on the stage."

Stanley sank back on his pillow and laughed till a fork that was on the edge of the stove in the other room fell to the floor. "The stage! You couldn't get a job if you stood around feeding lollipops to the office boy for the next century!"

"But I am going on. I've got a job already." She produced her typewritten part and laid it on the bed beside him.

Stanley sat up with a jolt. He fingered the blue booklet, and then to cover his mistake muttered: "Well, you may get canned, and if you don't you'll have to rehearse eight weeks without a cent, and then the play may last one night."

"Well, Stan, the main thing is getting started. They want me to memorize as much as I can to-day. Rehearsals begin to-morrow morning."

There was something catching in the way Eve went to work on her part. Stanley became interested, and by evening he was reading her cues and ordering her about as though he were the mighty Benrimo himself.

Something of their old sense of play flooded back over them. Stanley got out a box of make-up that he had used somewhere back in his college life and

proceeded to show Eve the tricks. He made her up so exquisitely that when she was finished he couldn't resist kissing her.

At eight-thirty there was a knock at the door. Eve stopped abruptly in the middle of a speech. It was an unfamiliar sound, as they were not used to visitors. The knock was repeated with an indignant pounding at the end.

Eve opened the door to a little blue-coated boy with a snub nose.

"Sign here," he said, thrusting a slip of yellow paper and a stubby pencil into her hand.

Eve signed the slip and the boy gave her a blue envelope.

"Somethin' to go back," he said.

Eve tore open the envelope and read a note from the Jewish frog.

"Kindly return part by messenger," it said, "as your services will not be required."

Staring and blinking, Eve sank into a chair.

"What is it?" Stanley asked.

She gave him the note without a word. He read it quietly and at once handed the boy the blue-bound typewritten sheets. The boy whistled off down the stairs and Stanley closed the door.

For a moment Eve sat rigid, then collapsed into a sobbing heap.

She looked so little and crushed that straightway the god in Stanley sprang to life. He took her in

his arms. He whispered great hopeful things. He manufactured lovely fairy tales. He kissed her nose and her chin and her ears.

“Eve, dear, don’t work! Just be my wife! You wanted only that before we married — want it again! It’ll be a paying investment in time. Dearest, as sorry as I am, I’m glad it happened. You’re too dominant; too whirl-windy; too violent. Just you taper off a little and try to fit into my slowness, then I’ll feel encouraged and go along faster — see? That’s the way things work out with married people. I’ll take care of you, and you know I will.”

She couldn’t speak. She crowded up close to him, beaten like Marj — poor little Marj on the night of the artists’ ball. She saw it all very plainly again. Marj, too, had crowded up close to the Shepherd on the way home in the taxi. Marj had been crushed. Well, there were other women who were crushed. What difference did it make whether one was drink-shattered or worry-shattered? One was shattered just the same. And a shattered woman wants her man’s arms as tight about her as she can get them.

Romancers are at great pains to tell about the crucial moment when something snaps. Nothing ever really snaps. The soul is simply shifted to another plane of living — usually a much lower and less interesting plane.

That is exactly what happened to Eve. The next morning she went out and pawned the rest of her

jewelry. She paid the rent for a week to come, and settled with the milkman. She went marketing, and one hour later climbed the tenement stairs with her hands full of the usual assortment of cheap vegetables. Her step was a trifle heavy and her face perhaps a shade paler, but that was because she was no longer Eve Kerwin, but Mrs. Stanley Bird. She had decided upon losing her identity.

CHAPTER XVI

MUCH as one might apply for a job of cooking or washing, Eve answered an ad. for a typist at eight dollars a week. She knew no shorthand, but, after all, that wasn't necessary for manuscript copying, and with two fingers she could fly along amazingly fast on the typewriter.

There were eleven applicants, and Miss Spitz, the boss, sat on the other side of a glass door marked "Private," and interviewed one girl at a time. In they went, one by one, and presently out they came, either very gay or very cynical.

When the tenth girl had been dismissed, Miss Spitz poked her head out at Eve and said: "Come in!"

The door slammed.

"Any experience?" asked Miss Spitz.

"Some," said Eve.

"Shorthand?"

"Doesn't matter. What typewriter?"

"Underwood."

Miss Spitz, the verbal economist, pressed a button and said sternly to the girl who entered: "Underwood!"

"Take dictation!" said Miss Spitz, holding out a sheet of yellow paper to Eve.

Choking and dizzy with fear of this narrow-eyed, stiff-collared business woman, Eve dropped into the chair.

She had never taken dictation before, and it was difficult to sit there thumping the slippery little keys with Miss Spitz's eyes burning a hole in her sleeve.

Miss Spitz jerked the paper out of the machine and looked at it for a minute. "All right!" she said. "Go in there and pick out a table. You're not very swift, but you'll earn eight dollars. If you learn to write faster I'll pay you by the word. Don't waste paper, and don't talk during office hours. Don't get interested in the story. Copy! That's all. Do it mechanically!"

Eve went into the main workroom, and the forewoman gave her a table, some paper, and a short story manuscript to copy.

The two fingers that she used for the job pounded along rapidly, but in her nervousness she kept striking L for P and F for R, and so on. Every moment she had to stop and rub out. The carbon copy she entirely forgot. As a result it was smeared and smudged from top to bottom. The forewoman tore it and the first sheet into pieces, and threw them into the waste-basket.

"Start over!" she said, angrily. "And it might

pay you to go a little slower, and use all your fingers. You can learn now as well as any time."

Humiliated and ashamed, Eve rolled the two fresh sheets into the machine. Slowly and laboriously, using all her fingers, she completed that first page again, and this time without a mistake. That was probably the secret of success for her — using all her fingers, even all her mental fingers, and using them carefully.

That dreadful first page! She knew every word of it. It burned itself into her brain like some long ago poem of her childhood. It became one of those things that she could never forget.

When the noon hour arrived the girls untied greasy little bundles of lunch and sat back chewing. Eve was hungry, but she dared not spend any of those last few cents in her pocket. Putting on her coat and hat with the air of dining at Whytes, she wandered down into Nassau Street.

Once she had seen cattle squeeze through a great windy gulch in the Rockies, and this reminded her of it. The narrow street was heaving with frosty-breathed people, pushing and elbowing, and stepping on each other in a violent hurry to get somewhere. They were so fearfully like the cattle in the great windy gulch in the Rockies that Eve unconsciously cocked her ears to hear them low.

And then the restaurant windows bewildered her. She was achingly hungry. Why was it people got

hungry all over again every day? Why hadn't we been created with radishes and onions and beets growing on our hands instead of fingers? It might not be so attractive to look at, but it would preclude for ever the humiliating necessity for money with which to buy food. She was beginning to be furious about it when someone clutched her arm and hugged up close to her.

"Hello, there, you new one!" It was the little red-headed Jewess who sat at the table next to hers in the office. She grinned up at Eve and asked. "Sunning yourself?"

They both laughed, because the sun, even at noon, had very little opportunity of showing himself in that dim alley-way between the sky-scrapers.

"How do you like it as far as you've gone? Pretty punk, ain't it?" said the little girl, nudging Eve familiarly.

"Well, it isn't as leisurely as the Waldorf Astoria, but I guess it'll improve."

"No, it won't improve! That's just the trouble. It goes on and on just like this. There's only one way for a steno. to improve her job, and that's to get another."

"Is Miss Spitz very hard to get on with?" asked Eve as they emerged into Franklin Square, where a youth was holding forth on Socialism.

"Oh, gee! Is Miss Spitz hard to get on with? I wonder!" gasped the little red-head. "Why,

she's a regular devil! But she's got a right! You know about her?"

"No, I don't know a thing on earth about her. Just answered an ad. and she took me."

"Well, she came over here from Rumania when she was just a kid and worked in sweat shops till she brought over the whole damn' family. 'Course, she had to educate her sisters and brothers, so she worked herself nearly blind. Ain't her lamps awful? Now they're all educated — college and everything, and she's taking a short-story course on Saturday mornings at Columbia. They say she's going to write great stuff about what she went through in the land of the free and the home of the brave!"

Just then the street speaker yelled out: "The land of the free and the home of the brave!"

The little red-headed Jewess laughed: "Gee, listen at him snitch my rhetoric!"

On the way back to the office she said: "You see, Miss New One, that's how it goes. It's just like the street speaker says: you can't work for no one else and get a square deal!"

The afternoon dragged by like a surfeited cobra. Eve was hungry. She was cold. Her spine ached, and one spot in her shoulder-blade pained sharply. Her eyes wandered back again and again to the clock on the wall. If it had not been for the golden pendulum that swayed eternally below the gilt-trimmed

face, Eve would have been willing to swear in court that the hands were not moving.

At five-thirty she put on her things mechanically, went down in the elevator, and dragged herself out into the street. Then suddenly inside of her something new was born. A sudden joy vibrated through her. A sudden thrill arose from all that shoving and pushing and jamming mass of human beings, of whom she now was one. All these scurrying people were the machinery that made the wheels go round! Because of her one day in Miss Spitz's office she, too, was now a tiny cog in that machinery.

She rushed up the elevated steps with the sense of something triumphant awakening in her brain.

After all, writing literature in a garret wasn't living! The business world was the only live thing in existence! The starving scribbler in the garret was merely a poorly paid cataloguer of the things that the person of business really experienced. Business! No wonder men dropped dead at the ticker! No wonder J. P. Morgan was greater than Nero! Business! Business! She was thrilled with the romance of business!

CHAPTER XVII

EVEN standing up in the smelly elevated train gave Eve a feeling of satisfaction. Back through her being surged that sense of oneness with humanity of which the isolated life in the tenements had robbed her.

All the way across Seventy-Seventh Street the history of Miss Spitz marched like a glorious pageant before her. Miss Spitz had been successful because she had done the thing nearest to her hand. That was the way women always succeeded. No inspiration, no talent; just a dull solving of the practical mysteries of life.

Then there was something to be said for working down-town, where the chairs were not too comfortable and the bookshelves farther away than arm's reach.

That was Stanley's difficulty. She saw him through the hard eyes of Miss Spitz. He was out of touch with the hurry. He was a poor boss for himself. He ought to be under someone's whip hand.

"A little talent — that's the precious thing!" she thought to herself. "Stanley's talent is too great —

he can never get hold of a small enough portion of it to make it useful."

She plodded along. "I'm so glad I'm ordinary. I'm so glad I'm untalented. I'm so glad I'm just a mother-person with a washer-woman's brain. Now I know I'll do something big!"

Then she bought some potatoes and brown bread and butter and hurried home.

The high tenement brought reaction. It was agonizing to climb the stairs, and, once inside the door, she flung herself down on the cot without speaking.

Stanley came in from the bedroom with a worried look in his eyes. "Where have you been all day, little Pussycat?" he asked, kissing her cheek a dozen times.

"I took a job typing," she answered, without opening her eyes.

He clenched his fists angrily. "You give it up!"

"I will, honey, when you get started. But until then we must live. Will you put the kettle on and make me a cup of tea, please?"

Stanley was excited. He banged the kettle against the enamelled sink and rattled the china cup on its saucer.

"I'll get started to-morrow!" he said. "I won't have you working for me!" He struck match after match and allowed them to blow out while the gas escaped.

"Did you work to-day, dear?" she asked, reaching out and taking the fifth lighted match from his fingers.

There was a slight explosion as the flame met the escaping gas, and Stanley jumped nervously.

"Wish you'd quit nagging me about working! I don't want to be asked all the time! Anyway, I slept too late. The scheme's no good. If I oversleep it upsets me so I can't go on the way I've planned. I'd just rather try again without any scheme."

"I think that's a fine idea," she said, rising to rinse out the teapot that he was holding helplessly in his hands. He seemed to know there was something he was to do with it, but what that something was he couldn't remember.

Eve went back to the cot. "Cut some bread, please," she said, "and put the butter and milk on the table."

"I drank all the milk. I'm sorry! Shall I run out and get some more, dear?"

"No, thanks, Stan; tea's all right without it if you don't look. Water's boiling, dear; take it off."

Stanley burned his fingers on the pot and stood there helplessly blowing on them. So Eve dragged herself up and poured the water over the tea-leaves.

This was the climax only of the first day. By the end of the week she had learned to sit relaxed instead of in a knot; she had learned not to hear the other

machines; she had learned to work evenly and with a certain system.

All the way home in the train on Saturday she crushed that first pay envelope in her hands. It was a matter of glorious excitement to her. Eight soiled one-dollar bills! At least there's one nice thing about soiled bills — they buy just as much as crisp new ones.

“Stan, dear, what would you do about those poor girls down at Miss Spitz's? They struggle around from eight to five-thirty for eight dollars a week, and all of them have indigestion from the stale lunches they cart from home. None of us can afford restaurants, but if we had some way of heating a little milk or making a cup of hot tea, we might at least keep our insides warm.”

Stanley, who was always seething with ideas, took up the problem eagerly. “Well,” he said, sitting down with paper and pencil, as he always did when he was talking seriously, “seems to me there are several ways out. Number one is to ask Miss Spitz to put in a gas-burner. Number two is to go to the agent of the building and ask for the use of some unoccupied office for a lunch room.”

“What are you doing, dear?” asked Eve, leaning over to admire the curves of an exquisite figure that he was drawing.

“Oh, this is a thing I've had in my mind for a long time — sort of human-fairy woman. See, I'd

like to make her the most impossibly beautiful creature in the world and still a mother-thing like you, but this isn't quite it!"

He tore the sheet through the middle.

"Oh, please, don't!" cried Eve, snatching it away before he had destroyed it completely. "Stan, dear, why don't you sit down and finish something? You know, I believe if you'd finish just one big splendid thing, you'd be able to keep right on. It's because you never finish anything that you lose courage. I've done four thousand words on the typewriter to-day. I'm getting quite expert, and you don't know what a sense of fulfilment came when I handed in those sheets. Why, it was hard and wonderful — almost like bearing a baby. Won't you try to finish a picture and have it ready to show me to-morrow night when I come home?"

"I'll finish two, you little lamb-pie!" He put his arm about her, and they were very happy all through the evening.

She kept from him little things like the paying of rent and the pawning of jewelry. What was the use? He couldn't help, and his mood was so much happier when she allowed him to forget. When he was happy she could almost see him back at work producing bigger things than in those old days, referred to by him with so much pride.

"You know, Eve, when I used to do comics for

the *Herald* I was as poor as the devil on sixty a week, because I was always saving so I could quit."

She sat on his lap and nestled her weary head under his ear. "And what did you do when you had a lot saved?"

"I went to the South Sea Islands and slept on the sand till it was all gone. Then I came back and went to work again."

She could feel his heart beat faster. He took a long breath and continued: "I did that stunt four different times, but the fourth time something happened, and when I got back I couldn't get to work, and it's been that way ever since." He pushed her gently away from him, and, walking into the other room, shut the door against her.

In a few minutes she crept in and threw herself on the bed beside him. "Don't worry, dear, it will all come right some day. You've had a beastly hard time with those twitchy nerves of yours, but many people go through the same thing. I feel it in my bones — good times are near."

He reached out and put his arm about her without lifting his face from the pillow. Great tears were squeezing themselves through his closed lids and trickling down on the white slip.

"Come back in the other room, Stan, and let's talk about those stenographer girls."

She pulled him up, pretending not to see his red eyeballs and quivering lips, but she did see them,

and the sight of them was the hardest of all the hard things she was trying to bear.

"Miss Spitz is a dog, and you have to be, to make money out of other people's labor," he said.

"No, I don't believe that, dear. I can imagine an office run on a co-operative plan where everybody would make money and be happy."

He laughed sarcastically. "Well, you just try it, Miss School of Philanthropy."

"That's what I intend to do! I've thought it all out. I'm going to stick around there till I learn every trick of the trade, and then I'm going to start a co-operative manuscript copying plant of my own."

"I wish you luck! But, to begin with, don't forget that most of those girls are a stupid bum lot." Stanley filled his charred pipe and puffed away with his feet on the gas stove.

"I know they are, Stan. There isn't a girl in that place now that isn't looking for another job. They all say, 'Sticking don't get you nothing,' but I for one am inclined to think they are wrong. They're all so ignorant and hopeless."

"You'd be, too!" he snapped, "if you'd been born in a slum and fed on slop all your life!"

"Why, dear, I'm not blaming them. I'm trying to think out some way of helping them."

"You'll never do it."

"I'll bet you twelve kisses to one that I will!"

After Stanley went to sleep Eve slipped away

down the tenement stairs for a breath of air under the stars. It was very late, but the Painter Man was striding up and down the river front. This was his time for walking, and since the night of their meeting Eve had gone to him many times for the comfort and encouragement that he always gave her. Sometimes she talked and sometimes she was silent. He never asked her questions, but he always answered any that she put. Another beautiful thing about him was that he never offered advice. The Painter Man's method was to lay before you the facts of life and let you make up your own mind about them.

To-night their shoes thumped on the cobbles as they walked back and forth below the playground block.

At last Eve asked: "What do you think about there just being one head to the family, Mr. Painter Man?"

"I think that when it becomes necessary to decide upon who is to hold the job there is no longer any use for the decision. In monarchies it is usually the weakest person who holds the sceptre, but in households it is invariably the strongest. It doesn't do to talk about it much, though, because sceptres have a horrid way of being pointed."

"Do you think, Mr. Painter Man, that a household is ever happy when a woman holds the sceptre?"

"No."

“ But what if the man isn’t strong enough to hold it? ”

“ Then that is a very sad household indeed.”

CHAPTER XVIII

GRADUALLY Eve's life divided itself into two distinct emotions: One was workmanlike and cruelly exact; the other was an easy-going game of make-believe. A game that she and Stanley were playing together. A pretend game that Stanley was designing a decorative work of monster size, a work so fantastic and stirring that the whole artistic world would eventually stand before it in open-mouthed astonishment. A great pretend game which kept Stanley sweet-natured and contented. A great game to which Eve said good-bye every morning before going out into the workaday world to develop a man's-sized brain.

At night there was always happiness and enthusiasm in Stanley's greeting. He had met a queer old woman in the park; she had allowed him to sketch her picture; he had added more notes and the old woman's face to his great book that would be called *The City*; he had eaten his luncheon in a Yorkville restaurant and sketched leering monsters through smoked breath as they had never been sketched before.

And then Eve would cook the supper that she had carried home in her arms, and they would eat like

very gay children. After supper she would press his clothes and clean his fractious ties that always dipped into things, and wash the dishes, and he would dry them and put them away. Then she would tell him with a great show of pride how his ideas were working out down-town in her office. The hours now were from nine to five; there was a permanent lunch room for all the girls in the building; there was an envelope for complaints; there was a special light just in the right position over each desk. All this exchange of conversation made them very happy and they loved each other increasingly, and neither ever spoke on the subject of the great hurt.

Spring lasted only a moment and June came with roses, and then in a breath December again, and Eve remembered with a shock that they had been married two years.

Oh, yes, they were very happy, but Eve knew that deep within her there was a twinge of conscience. To her it became the Twinge. It had been trying to make itself heard for months, but Eve had stopped her ears. Now, with her salary raised to fifteen a week, her responsibilities greater, and her actual work less, the Twinge became insistent.

All day long in the rush of things she quieted its bullying, but in the black stillness of the night it perched on the foot of her bed and shook its hideous fist in her face.

The thing that it said the oftenest and the thing

that cut the deepest was that she was wilfully ruining her husband's career.

She grew very indignant at the Twinge one day and insisted that she was supporting Stanley so that he might develop his great ideas. The Twinge laughed in her face and said. "You are supporting him because you love him and want to be near him and not because you want to give him a chance. A chance is just what you are *not* giving him!"

At that she challenged the Twinge to open combat and lost.

Perhaps even then she might have proven to the Twinge that it was wrong, had it not been for a subtle change that was taking place in Stanley himself. There was in him a certain reawakening of energy, but it was the wrong kind of energy. It was not an energy for work, but for fault-finding and backbiting. And it was all directed against her. Night after night he would harangue her for hours, until, conquered at last, she would burst into tears.

The moment she showed signs of breaking he would rise to the height of a god, shoulder her sorrow, and bear her pain. Nightly the process went on: the torture, the tears, and his power to soothe them away.

It was this very fact that gave the Twinge such an advantage. Yes, Stanley was powerful. He was a genius, but as long as she took care of him he'd never find himself. If she insisted on staying with

him and yet not taking the man's place, they'd both starve. So there was just one thing to do. She had known it for months, but she had never acknowledged to herself that she did know it.

March came with hideous winds and cold, the sort of cold that sinks into the marrow and freezes it hard.

One night towards the end of the month Eve came home with her mind made up.

The Nest was sweet and comforting. With a tightening in her throat she looked about at all the little things they had collected together — precious, valueless little things that the outside world would never understand.

She went over to the shelf and picked up one thing after another: an ancient Hebrew prayer-book that had interested Stanley; an Indian water jar, badly broken, but showing still a certain beauty in its proportions; an old jewel case with processions of horses and chariots all around its bulging sides.

Eve shut her eyes and hurried into the bedroom. That was no way to begin the evening. She had set herself a heartbreaking task, and mooning over a shelf of lover's junk was not part of it.

She took off her street clothes and slipped into a blue gingham apron.

After supper, when the table was cleared and Stanley had spread out the magazines, Eve said:

"Let's not read this evening, Stan."

Stanley slammed his book down with a bang.

Anger was his new method of not showing how badly he felt, and Eve understood and he understood that she did.

"What's the grouch now?" he asked.

"I've thought of a clever series of comics that you could do. I know they would be a go!"

He sneered. "Since when have you got an idea? You get the big-head quicker than any human being I ever met in my life."

It surprised her that she didn't even feel like crying. Just pretending not to notice what she didn't want to notice, she went on: "I thought, dear, that while you were waiting for the big ideas to crystallize you might do some practical little thing so the world wouldn't forget you."

"The world won't forget me!" he snapped. "I'll not prostitute my talent! It doesn't in the least matter if you type all day long — you can't do anything else! I did comics for four years, and I'll be hanged if I'll ruin my reputation doing trash any more!" His eyes popped like fire-crackers.

"I don't think it would hurt your reputation at all. The practical things of life are the things to do first, then you can work your way to your dreams." Her tones were soft and quiet, but they didn't soothe Stanley.

"You can run your own game, my lady, but you can't run mine!" He snatched his hat and started

towards the door. His hand was on the knob, then he turned and came back into the room.

"Eve, dear," he said, coming over to her and taking both her hands in his, "you've been a wonderful woman, but it's no use. I'm beaten, and there's only one way out. Are you big enough?"

She looked at him with fear in her eyes. His face was set like a death-mask, yet nowhere in all her soul could she find a single word with which to comfort him.

He pressed her hands till the bones creaked. "Are you big enough, Eve, to go with me anywhere I ask you to go?"

Eve could not part her frozen lips.

"Are you big enough to close all the windows and stuff all the cracks and turn on the gas?" He jerked her up and crushed her painfully against him. "Karl Marx's two daughters did it when they found they were through with living. Are you big enough, darling, to go with me?"

His hands, clutching her, trembled for an answer. She drew them down from her shoulders and kissed them quietly.

"Go out under the stars, dearest, and think it all over. There must be some other way."

When the sound of his steps had melted into the silent coldness of the night, Eve, too, went out under the stars, but in the opposite direction.

CHAPTER XIX

SLEET and rain hissed over the city. It was the early evening hour when men come to kiss their women. The hour when men come to tell their women that there will be no more kisses. The hour when women's hearts are lighted; the hour when women's hearts are broken.

Eve blew out the candle and crossed for the thousandth time to the window. She rubbed Spring's breath from the pane and looked out across Washington Square.

Will any of those men compiling the new dictionary be able to tell us what the word *lonely* means? "Sequestered from company or neighbors; solitary, retired; not frequented by human beings," etc.? No! that is not the meaning of *lonely*! The bitterest loneliness comes in the very broil of crowds! Loneliness has nothing to do with neighbors! Loneliness is not physical! Loneliness is a thing of the soul!

Eve was not looking at anything in the Square. She was trying to pierce beyond — over the trees and over the bridges, through the walls of brick and stone, over the skyscrapers, over the towers — to Seventy-Seventh Street!

It was cold near the window. She shuddered and turned around expectant, as though she had heard someone coming up the stairs, as though she had heard someone calling her!

The red mouth of the Franklin stove grinned. Some coals slipped through the grate and rattled down on the ashpan. She looked fearfully about the huge attic room — the splintered floor, the cobwebby rafters, the eager little stove so red and inadequate. The building was deathly still. On all the four floors below her the sweatshops slept.

The Painter Man was right. How she missed his quiet masterfulness! Would he have told her that cold attic rooms and loneliness of the soul came from being too sure about life? Would he have told her that fate was playing one of its practical jokes?

Work had been no escape. All day long in Miss Spitz's office she banged viciously at the typewriter keys to drown the other banging in her brain. Each night she crawled to her garret-studio and sank down helplessly on the couch. If four short weeks had done this to her, how could she hope to fight through the endless weeks and years to come?

She knew she couldn't fight! "So," said her bursting heart within her, "why try? You'll go back to him some day — why not now?"

"Stanley!" she sobbed, and she felt him answer all across the city, "Eve!"

Out into the April night she fled, stumbling and

slipping on the muddy pavements. People in the street car stared at her. Let them stare! What did she care!

A million times her emotions raced back and forth while the street car crept along.

At last she found herself beneath his windows. Then she grew fearful. At the farthest point across the street she stood and looked up till the back of her neck ached with the strain.

His lamp was lighted — their lamp, their treasured amber lamp. Its soft glow filled the room and floated out into the night.

“Stanley, dear, are you thinking of me?”

As though he had heard her whisper, he came to the window and looked out. She couldn't see his face for the shadows, but his body stood erect and determined. Suddenly he turned, and she could see him putting on his hat and coat.

“He is coming down into the night to search for me as I have come down into the night to search for him!” Eve cried aloud as she fled away.

Somewhere she got into a Fifth Avenue 'bus and spun down the shining asphalt to the Square. It was deserted. She crept up the steps at Seventy-One South and put her key into the lock. All the black eyes of the building mocked at her. She groped in the smelly hallway for the stairs. Fear — the mere physical fear of darkness tugged at the hem of her skirt.

It was a hideous thing to live alone at the top of a factory building, but this was the best she had been able to find after a heartbreaking search.

She dropped down before the fire and poked aimlessly at the coals, until a sudden strange gaiety took possession of her.

"I can wait!" she laughed. "He's working — I could tell it by the set of his shoulders. He's working for me! He's going to succeed for me! The glorious time is coming! I can wait!"

From the Italian quarter came the squeaky tones of a tenement phonograph grinding its hard rubber heart out in "Apple Blossom Time in Normandy!" She found herself singing to its wheezy accompaniment, singing with happiness. "Only a little while to wait! How we will love each other for the sacrifice!"

She undressed and bathed in a little foot-tub before the fire, slipped a fresh soft gown over her shoulders, and wound a woolly bath robe about her body.

Ten minutes later the windows were open, and she was under the covers with a hot iron toasting her feet.

She smiled sleepily into her pillow. "Only a little while to wait! Stanley, darling, only a little while to wait!"

CHAPTER XX

ROY COWDRY lived on the rich side of Washington Square at Number Three. Eve climbed the stairs to his studio with the fear of everything in her heart.

Her hot brain was scorching with all the changes that had taken place in her life during the past two months — two months that had stretched out in a tortuous length of hurts and sobs and disillusionments.

Her legs dragged heavily to the top of the first flight. It was breathless and dusty.

The top of the second flight was dustier and older and more stifling. She sat down on a hall bench and pressed her fingers into her eyes: "I must not cry any more — I am nearly blind! I *must* not cry any more!"

She rose and struggled up the third flight. Perhaps the rest wouldn't be so difficult. Perhaps her heart would finally get accustomed to the strain. Hearts do get accustomed to almost anything, it seems.

Roy Cowdry was one of those half-serious persons who clip coupons for a living and write plays for amusement — in his case pretty good plays.

Before his open fire stood a little pie-crust table laden with hot tea and home-made cookies. The sight of so much cosiness sent the truant blood from Eve's brain back into her heart.

"It's awfully decent of you to ask me up here, Mr. Cowdry, and I hope you won't think that I've come just because I want your work. All I want you to give me is a list of literary folk whom I can canvass without using your name."

"Use my name!" Cowdry insisted cordially. "You've got to use my name!" Then he added in a whisper: "You may use it for life if you want to."

They both laughed, and Eve promised to consider his offer. Then they drank four cups of tea apiece, and started out for a long walk.

"Aren't you the clever thing to go into business for yourself! I'll bet on you, Miss Kerwin!"

His confidence in her ability was very heartening, but Eve answered modestly: "We won't be able to estimate how clever I am until six months from now. You see, I'm not entirely alone. I took the best typist Miss Spitz had — little Miss Gumbiner. She's a perfect shark for throwing light on what the author means. We're partners."

"Well, you can have my work, and I'll hammer you out a list of people who are always begging for a good typist. . . . Let's go over there for supper." He pointed across the Square to Fourth Street.

"Not now!" groaned Eve. "I'm all full of tea

and things. I couldn't eat even a salad till eight o'clock!"

"Very well, then. We'll walk up Fifth Avenue and come back later. This place is open pretty nearly all night."

Cowdry had the reputation for being very successful with women. They said it was the way he played the mandolin and whispered things to them, but Eve found herself no more responsive to his charms than if he had been a sack of potatoes dragging at her elbow. Her body was walking beside him, but her soul had flown away to Seventy-Seventh Street. . . .

Why hadn't Stanley hunted her out? He could easily have found her if he had wanted to. It must be that pride was keeping him away until he had accomplished something really big. Then! Then!

She was thrilling over the thought of remarriage with him, when Cowdry broke in upon her with. "How's Marj? I haven't seen her for a coon's age!"

"Didn't you know that Marj is very ill? She and her Shepherd are married and living in a shack in the Adirondacks."

"I certainly did not know it, but I've been in England lately, so why should I? Let's send her some peanuts or crackerjack or something."

They went into a Page and Shaw place that was

still open and ordered a big box of the kind of candy that Marj loved.

"How's your appetite by this time, Miss Kerwin? You know tea just stimulates one for real food."

"I think I'll be equal to something by the time we've walked back."

Cowdry sat down on a water-plug and stamped his feet like a naughty boy. "I won't walk back," he cried. "I'm hungry! Mean, mean mamma!"

She took his hand and coaxed him along. "It must walk back to Twenty-Third, and then if it wants to it can climb up on top of a 'bus and play it's a circus parade."

The apparently pacified child clung to her hand, and together they jogged all the way back to the Fourth Street restaurant.

There they were met with a slap of smoke and a burst of music when the door opened. Men and women were dancing and whirling and bumping each other in the crowded space of a small bar-room.

The tables were pushed against the walls, and drunken candles were melting sideways in little green saucers on the window-sills.

The dust bit scorchingly into Eve's nostrils as though someone were beating carpets. Windows and curtains were down tight to hide the music and the smoke and the clinking of glasses away from the outside world, because the outside world has a way of extracting licenses. There was a weary joy

about these people — an ungracious hurry to clutch sensations before they slipped away forever.

The rhythm got into Eve's brain and made her dizzy. She wasn't sure whether she wanted to cry or laugh as Cowdry took her hand and led her up the steep narrow stairway to the dining-room.

It was an old-fashioned barn of a place, with long tables and benches strung against the walls. It was packed with people: people limp and people stiff, painted people, pale people, drunken people, sober people — weary, bleary people!

Everybody knew everybody else. Cowdry visited each table, introducing Eve en route. In the end he chose a place in the far corner of the room and motioned her to sit beside him.

"Want you to myself now — you can mix up with them later on." He whispered something about cocktails to greasy Fritz, the waiter, and greasy Fritz hurried off to the back of the restaurant and mumbled something down the dumb-waiter shaft.

Cowdry pushed aside a tipsy array of cream pitchers, sugar bowls, mustard pots, and unwashed glasses. Then he made a broom out of a paper napkin and swept the table clear of crumbs and potato chips, so that Eve might have a place to rest her elbows. Together they bent their heads over the inky blurred menu.

"Chicken?" asked Eve. "Is that good?"

"Fine, and I'll make you a Russian dressing for

your salad, and the cakes are gorgeriferous, and so is the macaroni." Then, without stopping for breath, he demanded: "Why in hell do you wear sailor blouses?"

Eve could have knifed him for the question. It was as though he had said: "Why in hell do you love Stanley?"

"Sailor blouses!" she stammered. "Why, don't you like them? They're a great comfort! They — they're the only things on earth that cost a dollar and last a lifetime!"

"Oh, they're all right in the right place, but a woman as good looking as you ought to wear silks and satins."

Then her championship of Stanley's ideals asserted itself proudly.

"Silks and satins! I haven't had a thread of silk on my back since I learned about the Paterson strike!"

"Well, I'll be damned if I wouldn't rather wear silk that grown-up people make than cotton picked by babies!"

"Babies?" gasped Eve. "What do you mean — babies?"

"Why, Miss Kerwin, don't you read the papers?"

"No, I hate papers!" She laughed a funny quivery little laugh of impatience.

"Well, I'd suggest that you learn to like them. Nothing low-brow about papers. I buy ten or twelve

a day — get 'em still warm from the press. Lots going on in this world of ours, especially in the cotton trade."

He banged his fists down on the table till the dishes rattled. "There's nothing rottener than cotton! Compared with it, silk is a regular little golden street of paradise. They take creeping babies and make 'em pick the stuff. Big sacks tied around their necks, eight hours a day! The kids that survive naturally never grow to human size, but, thank God, most of 'em die!"

Eve's face turned as white as her blouse. Taking it as a tribute to his story-telling, Cowdry added further details.

But Eve was white for quite another reason. Why hadn't Stanley told her about this? It wasn't possible he didn't know. If he had humbled her for wearing silks and satins, he should have murdered her for wearing cotton. Something was wrong somewhere. Was it Stanley? Could it be? . . . The pillars of confidence upon which her very soul rested began to crumble.

"That's not all!" broke in Cowdry. "Those that survive go to work in the mills!" Then he laughed and patted her arm. "Don't take it so seriously, Miss Kerwin! Everything's like that all over the world, only cotton's a little rottener than the rest because the South's so damned lazy. Here! Let's

.

can this obituary service. Ice cream or home-made pie?"

"No dessert, please. I can't eat a bite more."

"Why all this grief? It doesn't last long for those kids."

Eve looked up hopefully.

"No," drawled Cowdry. "They get threads in their lungs and die of T. B. before they're any age at all. Then their mammas and papas produce another batch."

"Oh, let's have some fresh air!" cried Eve, standing up suddenly.

Cowdry caught her by the arm. "Wait a minute, dear lady! Even if you don't eat the grub, you have to pay."

A gentleman with pink beads around his neck strolled over and asked: "What's the tiff?"

"Oh, nothing personal, I assure you. Just telling her about child labor in the South, and it got her goat."

"Well, why don't you tell her something sweet now? For instance, take the woollen mills in New England."

"You tell her, Don Juan," said Cowdry.

Don Juan cleared his throat and began: "Well, once I had a hunting lodge in Massachusetts. In the morning, when I'd get up at four and wade through the snow and ice to find if my traps had mangled anything in the night, I used to see little

lights come swinging down the hills. The lights hung very low to the ground and there were hundreds of them, like a will-o'-the-wisp carnival. Only it wasn't a carnival at all. It was the children, very little ones, going to work in the mills. At night, long after dark, the carnival started again and the little lights swung low — this time up and up and up the hills, and that meant that the mills were closed and the babies were going home to their cradles."

Hot needle points pricked Eve's brain, and instinctively her hands pulled away from the woolly touch of her skirt.

"Why doesn't somebody do something about it?" she asked, so naïvely, that the man with the pink beads went off into spasms of laughter.

The horrors that Eve was hearing were blows of a kind, but they were as light as a humming-bird's kiss compared with the other things that smote her. Stanley — his one-sidedness, his emotional and illogical conclusions — what caused them? Her silk dresses — no, she didn't want them back — but — were these people telling her untruths? If they were not, then Stanley was! But perhaps he didn't know about these things. Yet he was too clever not to know. Why, then, did he urge her to wear cotton blouses? Was it because he was too lazy to dress himself in anything but a flannel shirt that he commanded her to walk about the earth unattractive and plain? No! That was not it! It couldn't be! Then

what was it? What was crumbling? Why did the whole earth feel like quicksand under her feet? Why was there no longer a place where she could stand and know herself to be safe? On the flaming red of her brain these questions pounded like a blacksmith's hammer.

Her tottering world; these tawdy creatures about her — cigarette-smoking women and soft-collared men — she shivered with disgust. The people at the next table were watching her through narrowed eyelids, as though she were some new million-legged bug with nothing special to offer them but the joy of pulling her to pieces.

It was very little better in the sky-lighted studio where Cowdry took her afterwards, but at least there were huge squashy cushions there where she could hide and relax. It was a large party, and for a while she was left quite alone with the drama of her own terrifying emotions.

"You're no good as a tragedy queen, Miss Kerwin," said Cowdry, handing her a cocktail. "Sip this, and you'll be much more attractive. Open your moufie and drink, then your troubles'll trot off to the back of your brain where they belong."

But she didn't want to drink. She wanted to be clear-headed and sharp. She wanted to study this room full of couples in intimate poses and search out their careless philosophy. Perhaps she was all wrong in her sublime seriousness about life. Perhaps

they were right to take it as a happy joke. Yet was life to them as altogether sweet and worth while as it looked, or was their vision blurred? . . . Was life for her as altogether woeful and tragic as it looked, or was her vision blurred?

CHAPTER XXI

It was midnight and summer. Eve had just cold-creamed her face and settled down with a cup of tea before the window when there came three quick pulls at the door bell.

She decided at once not to answer. It rang again and again and again until, with a sudden panicky fear that it might be some urgent message from Stanley — even Stanley himself, she stepped out on the fire-escape and called down, "Who's ringing?"

An entirely unfamiliar voice called back: "Is Miss Kerwin in? Frightful hurry about getting some typing done! I saw a light; that's why I rang."

"Yes, she's in," said Eve. "Wait a minute." Back in the studio, she pinned her hair up, slipped into a blouse and skirt, then flew down the creaky stairs to open the front door.

"Don't stumble here at this turning. Be careful! No, please go first so that I shan't make a shadow. I know the way."

He was a small man with a pinched, Jewish nose and whimsical Irish eyes.

Up in the studio he began to explain. "You see,

Mr. Callahan's taken this play of mine, but he's nervous and exacting and I've had to do a lot of changing — put in bedsteads and kimonos and things so's the public'll like it."

He looked at her questioningly, and she answered: "I see, I see."

"He's nervous and exacting, as I said before, and I've got to have all these changes in by to-morrow morning — eight o'clock sharp, he said, but he meant ten, because he never gets up till eleven."

Eve liked the little man. Nothing but his eyes were gay, but they were on the verge of laughter all the time.

She smiled back at him. "So you want me to sit up all night and type while you go home and sleep! Is that it?"

"Nothing so tragic!" he declared. "I'll stay right here and fan you or give you aromatic spirits of ammonia or cocktails till it's all done, and then I'll take you out and give you breakfast."

"It's a go!" she said, pulling her table about till the drop-light was directly over her head.

Away she rattled like a machine-gun while the little man sat quietly on the floor in front of the window, smiling at the world outside. Occasionally she glanced at him. He was a dreamer, too. Perhaps all great men had to be dreamers.

No doubt the huge window was his proscenium arch, and beyond tripped the actors and actresses of

his dreams. Perhaps as her fingers flew his words were coming into life before his eyes. He leaned over on his elbow and rested his ear in the palm of his hand. His hand gave way slowly and his head drooped to the rug; the fringed curtains came down over his laughing eyes, and he slept huddled like a weary child.

Eve slowed down gradually so that the silence wouldn't awaken him, and, creeping across the room, spread a huge woolly shawl over his slender body.

She stood there for a moment looking down at him. He was the Stanley type — sweet, sweet droopy children, both of them. For contrast she looked up at a plaster cast of the "Incense Burner" that stood on the beam above the droplight. There was the big-muscled man, the sublime male, the father of nations!

She glanced around her studio. How beautiful it was in black and white and splashes of turquoise-blue! Things had changed mightily since her arrival a few months before. The durable brass affair that had taken the place of the weak little cardboard sign on the door downstairs told the story of Kerwin and Company, Expert Typists.

All day long from the room behind her studio came the music of four galloping machines. All day long, up-town and down, in subways and 'buses and elevateds, Eve canvassed from office to studio, from studio to Harlem flat, from Harlem flat to East

River tenement — wherever there was the possibility of getting a manuscript to type.

That one evening spent with Cowdry had made great changes in her being. She decided that Stanley was illogical, but she loved him, anyway. She wanted him every moment of her life and she was going to have him. He had struggled pathetically against conditions and it was of no use. Socialism and anarchism and all the other isms were not methods by which to make one's living. They were lovely Spring dreams that would eventually come to pass, but not through his effort or anybody's effort, but just through the slow and natural evolution of things.

She looked down at the filmy blouse she was wearing and thought: "Some poor creature probably put her eyes out embroidering this. Well, that is horrible, of course; but the blouse is very beautiful, and if I refuse to wear it that won't heal conditions in Bulgaria or Rumania or Mesopotamia or wherever agile fingers create such things."

And, judging by the eager work that Stanley was doing in the newspaper world, great changes were also taking place out on Seventy-Seventh Street. Evidently Stanley, too, had about arrived at the same conclusions. She pulled down the scrap-book where all his precious cartoons were pasted. *The American* was running a daily strip: "Modern Hans Andersen," and the little sparrow in the right-hand lower

corner of the last picture was Stanley's signature. His work was exquisite, almost too exquisite for newspaper reproduction. Eve ran her finger along the lovely lines, studying every turn. Yes, his wonderful imagination that had been blocked so long was flowing again, and flowering again — flowering miraculously.

And the strip was really very funny, too. There was always a business bore with unalterable schemes — schemes that could not fail, million-dollar Charlie Chaplin salaries, and such. Then, poof! The pie-faced boob always walked away with the spoils. It wasn't the humor that riveted Eve to the page, but the satire. There it was, a supposedly silly little strip, yet terrific, mysterious, and searching. Something that cut through all the outer reserves and attacked the vital energies of life. It was the same old philosophy that life cannot be planned, that made the thing so poignant. Of course, this would apparently escape the man in the street, but actually it would be the very thing that would hold him.

Eve sat down at her typewriter again and gave herself over to a sort of future-fancying.

She had not seen Stanley since that stormy night when she stood below his windows. But, in spite of a life that was crowded and difficult, she thought of him always. Those daily cartoons were her one comfort, for they were the earnest of her reward

for giving him the chance to fight out his salvation alone.

She leaned over and pressed her forehead against the cold iron of the typewriter. Just at this lonely hour she wanted him most. She wanted his kisses. She wanted more and more the *little language* in her ear. She wanted their playtimes together and their long walks through the crowded East Side streets. She wanted him big and glorified as she had planned him.

Why had she failed? Why couldn't two human beings who adored each other work out their destiny together instead of apart? Why was fate always delighting in unnecessary human tragedies?

She sat up suddenly and began to work again. She pounded away as though she were determined to beat something into life. She hunched her shoulders over the keyboard, she glued her eyes to the manuscript. She feared to look up lest she might have to acknowledge a thought, a conviction, a determination which had that moment seized her.

But even with head bent low she had finally to acknowledge it, anyway.

She would go back to Stanley to-morrow! When the sun was up! When the air was heavy with loving and mating! When Summer was running along all the highways of the world throwing leaves and buds out of his magician's cap! To-morrow! It was already to-morrow!

Closer she leaned, to pound out the last page of the stranger's play; then she stood up and, stretching her arms high above her head, murmured: "What a backache! What yawns!"

Tip-toeing over to the window she knelt down with her arms resting on the sill. It was what some great man had called "the grey chiffon hour, when the pale moon bows low in maidenly fashion and the sun, leonine and fierce, strides across the earth melting the mysteries with his yellow breath."

The yellow breath melted the mysteries for Eve. She sighed wearily and smiled. Well, the future-fancying had been worth while. She might not have been able to last through the night had it not been for the glory of the coming day.

Now it was all over. To-morrow was here. Summer was here. Birds were chittering in the Square and the daylight asked: "Go back to Stanley?" and she answered: "Of course I shall do nothing of the sort!"

The man on the rug sat up suddenly, rubbing his eyes like a little child.

"Oh, dear me, I must have dozed! How can you ever forgive me — I ——"

Eve stopped him with a big, healthy laugh. "Yes, I'm very much afraid that you dozed. You silly man, why should both of us have stayed awake because I had to work?"

He looked at the woolly shawl. "And you cov-

ered me up, too! You're the mother-kind all right. You'd better be careful, because that sort never marries satisfactorily."

"I'm not the mother-kind at all!" said Eve. "I'm just a hard-hearted business woman, and you'll think so, too, when you get my bill for staying up all night!"

"It's worth a million dollars!" he said, jumping to his feet. "And now about that breakfast. Suppose I go out and buy some nice things and we cook them here?"

"No, thanks!" said Eve. "I've passed the stage of wanting to feed men. I want them to feed me! So, you see, I'm *not* a mother-woman after all!"

"I don't blame you, Miss Kerwin. Blank foolishness to do that kind of work when you don't have to."

"It isn't that, Mr. What's-your-name; but feeding a man reminds me of something I'd rather forget."

For a moment his Irish eyes clouded as though there were memories behind them, too; then he reached for the manuscript that she was holding in her hands.

"No, no!" she said, holding tight to the type-written sheets. "I've got to correct these. That's the way I've made my hit. Nothing but perfect copy goes out of this place. I say, can't you waste an hour somewhere while I skim through this and make myself morningfied? Then we'll go way up to the

Waldorf and have a 'Regular Breakfast' for fifty cents if you're poor, and an irregular one if you're rich. And by the way, before you go, would you mind telling me what your name is? Just a little formality."

"Margate!" He laughed and trotted off down the steps and out into the awakened Square.

CHAPTER XXII

SOME days after Margate got his manuscript back from Eve the Fate Sisters were putting in an eight-hour day at carding and weaving and spinning when they struck a knot in the shape of a very oily person who climbed the stairs to the offices of Kerwin and Company, presented a play to be copied, and asked to have the work completed within a week.

Eve glanced over the pages to make sure that she understood them. Suddenly she came upon a scene that caused her to exclaim a little startled "Oh!" She skimmed along further and found another surprising scene. She said nothing, but quietly made out the following questions on a slip of paper and handed them to her prospective client.

Have you had this copied before?

Has anyone collaborated with you?

Have you discussed your plot with anyone?

The man wrote "No" after every question and signed his name.

After she left Eve read through the manuscript carefully. She felt more and more puzzled, and she wondered if she had better consult Margate. Not yet, she decided, as there could be no real danger.

But she treasured the little paper her new client had signed, and for safe-keeping pinned it with her money inside her blouse.

The acquaintance with Margate continued. Their breakfast at the Waldorf was followed by tea at the Ritz. After that there were several dinners. Then he suggested that, for the fun and experience of the thing, Eve should take the part of the maid in the first and last acts of his play and go on as one of the mob in all the acts between.

"It would be fun and it would be experience," Eve said, and accepted his offer.

And this leads through the sweltering summer to the Indian red of October and a dress rehearsal of the play. Three hundred principals and supers shivered in the wings while Callahan, the great producer, stormed and raged about the place like a caged hyena.

The eight weeks of rehearsal disillusioned Eve concerning the stage. She had expected to find actors fascinating, and they weren't even interesting. Press agent stories announced that many fine ladies from the vicinity of Fifth Avenue had joined the company for stage experience. As a matter of truth, they were mostly bedraggled females from Harlem and the Bronx who existed year in year out on the eight dollars a week that a super is paid — professional "Extra Ladies," dressed in the cast-off clothes and shoes six or seven years removed from Callahan's stars.

A seasoned theatre-goer might even have said: "Oh, see that orchid dress on the right? Well, Etheline Silverthread wore that in 'Conquering Caroline!'" or "See that cardinal robe? Didn't Rosalie Heatherbloom wear that in 'Beautiful Bachelor Buttons' at The Empire the year I came out?"

Poor "Extra Ladies"—so many of them had babies! Quiet, sickly little creatures they were, that slept through the performances in suitcases under the dressing-tables.

Isn't it marvelous that so much frazzled humanity can mass up rose-colored from the other side of the footlights?

"It's limberger!" shouted Callahan, striding up and down the middle aisle of the great theatre, gulping cocktails from a water pitcher. "It's limberger! To the garbage can! To the garbage can, I tell you!" And draining the last drop of alcoholic consolation he smashed the pitcher on the floor and sank into the nearest red velvet seat, covering his face with his hands.

Callahan had his own way of producing a play. He hired the strongest truck horse he knew to drag the circus into shape, then he appeared at the first dress rehearsal and ground it to sausage meat.

But he simply couldn't do it without weeping. He was weeping now. Fat tears dripped through the eight cracks between his ten fingers.

Margate, the author, who should by all precedent have been seated in the far dimness of the back row, buzzed about like a debutante at her coming-out party. He couldn't help it. It was his first play. He whispered and explained, and exhorted, and shook the script in people's faces till Callahan shouted for him to dry up.

He did dry up, like a wet towel over a hot radiator, and like the wet towel he dried stiff. He stalked over the little run-way that sprouted from the middle aisle to the stage, and sat himself down like a wooden Indian in a seat conspicuous, but far removed from Callahan.

Callahan rose to his feet. Tears were streaming down his face.

"I'm ruined!" he shouted. "That's what I am — I'm ruined! The play's a damned failure. Every cent I've got on earth is tied up in it! I'm ruined! I tell you I'm ruined!" He staggered into a box and stepped over the brass railing to the side of the stage, and Margate, entirely forgetful of his injured dignity, jumped up and followed him.

"That's how Drury Lane puts it all over us!" wailed Callahan, pointing to the boathouse with vivid green vines painted on its wall. "Wouldn't have a lousy painted vine crawlin' over a canvas dock! They'd have the real shrubbery cottoning to wood! Savey! I ain't mad at you! You done swell, but why didn't you pad it out? Don't save

me money! I'll buy you a lumber yard! Ain't I just had the 'Mermaidens' fail on me, and ain't I got three hundred dollars' worth of seaweed and honeysuckle souring in the warehouse? Use 'em! Use 'em! Smear 'em all over the place! Don't let Drury Lane knock the stuffins out of you! Work like hell and don't look lousy!"

Then he pulled out a stogie and lit it, and those who were acquainted with the great producer knew that he didn't consider himself ruined at all, but had just progressed to the point where he was preparing to roll up his sleeves and get to work.

"The Other Side" was the biggest melodrama that he had ever attempted. In fact, it was about the biggest thing anybody had ever put on outside a circus tent. There were three hundred people in it and twenty-five horses, two tallyhoes, four automobiles, and an aeroplane.

Callahan chewed and puffed at his stogie as though it were the only tangible thing on earth.

"Strike!" he yelled, "and travel right through again so I can rip the guts out of it on the way!"

Fifty-five stage hands whisked the adventurers' den off and slid the countryside into place.

The trumpeter blew his horn and a tallyho, drawn by six excited horses, pounded down the stage dragging with it the huge tree that decorated the middle of the lawn. The ingénue fainted, everybody

screamed, the horses reared up on their hind legs ready to dash across the footlights.

Fifty-five stage hands swarmed around the coach like ants around a cracker crumb. The horses were unhitched and led off disgraced. The ingénue was stretched out on the stage and given a dose of aromatic spirits of ammonia.

Callahan was blazing. "Gee! that's a swell entrance! Do that the opening night and I'll shoot your damned head off!" He spat his words at the driver.

The driver crawled down off the box, walked to the stage entrance, and then whisking about on his heel, called back: "Get somebody else to do your dirty work! I'm through!"

"Proceed with the drowning!" shouted Callahan.

The hero appeared, carrying in his arms the super, who was to get a nightly wetting in place of the heroine.

Callahan threw his hat and coat on the stage and roared with laughter, only it wasn't the kind of laughter that improves one's digestion.

"Do you call that wet? My God, look at her hair — dry as the Sahara! Wet 'er! I say, wet 'er!"

The super jumped out of the brave hero's arms, and faced Callahan. "If I ain't wet enough, then you get somebody else that'll get wetter! I ain't pleadin' for pneumonia at eight dollars a week!"

"Out you go!" bawled Callahan. He turned toward the empty theatre and called: "Miss Trixy, here's your chance!"

A small blonde girl hurried up out of the dark and scrambled to the stage.

Callahan looked her in the eye. "Drown yourself! W-e-t, wet," he spelled out. "No sprinkling! Drown yourself! Buy a rubber union suit and charge it to me, but drown w-e-t! Are you willing?"

"Yes, sir," she answered, white and scared as Callahan pushed her into the hero's arms.

In the scene before the saloon, where the villainess stabs the tramp who knows her secret, Callahan went mad.

"My God, what is this? A suffrage parade? What are all these females for? They don't advance the plot! Can 'em! I say, can 'em! Can that beggar at the corner! Can the whole damn' scene and jump to the murder!"

When the fort was bombarded, Callahan pulled out the three remaining hairs on top of his head.

"Noise! Nothing but noise! The whole damned scene is on the fritz! Cut it!"

The truck-horse stage director rushed over and whispered: "Mr. Callahan, that scenery cost five thousand dollars!"

"What the hell do I care if it cost five hundred thousand dollars! To the ash heap! Who the hell

planned that scene? That's what I want to know! Let a boy die for forty-five minutes singing 'My Bonnie lies over the ocean!' Ha! Ha! Ha! Save the agony and choke him now! Bring on the Café stuff!"

Stone walls and vine-clad trellises were rushed on, and in three minutes there were ladies and gentlemen chatting and smoking at all the tables except one. That was reserved for the entrance of the villainess.

And the villainess! How Callahan yelped at her!

"God, you don't know how to look ruined! Here!" He pushed her out of the way and acted her part. His voice, his head, the droop of his shoulders, were things that a Bernhardt might have envied. When at last he wept unreservedly on the villain's shoulder, out of the wings came bravos and thundering applause from three hundred excited supers.

It was midnight when Callahan finally sank down on the boathouse steps and muttered: "Now it's a play, by God! Now it's a play!"

Hot coffee was passed around to resuscitate the exhausted actors, and Callahan drank his out of the bucket. With great effort he rose stiffly and walked to the middle of the stage. "You've been fine! Every damned one of you!" He waved his hand in a semicircle to include every actor and actress, every stage hand, every "extra person" in the cast. "I don't know how I'll ever thank you enough. If

the play's a success, we'll all be rich. If it's a failure, no person here shall ever come to want as long as I can beg, borrow, or steal the money to help him out! Now we're going through again straight to the end!"

Eve was so upset when she came on as the maid that Callahan barked at her like a dog. "You! Have you got anything to say? Tell it to the audience, don't murmur into the theatrical scrim!"

Callahan didn't understand her fear. Eve wasn't afraid of him, but of a certain oily face that she had seen creeping about in the back of the theatre for the past three hours.

Nobody seemed to notice it until it walked down the middle aisle and up the run-way over the orchestra to the centre of the stage. Of course, the face had a body hitched to it, but the body didn't count at all. It was the snarling, white face that was startling.

Callahan was as superstitious as the devil himself, and those who happened to be facing him at the time said afterwards that for a moment he looked frightened.

"This play's not going on!" announced the oily face.

Callahan strode up and poked his square chin almost into the intruder's jaw. "The hell it isn't!" he muttered, clenching and unclenching his right fist.

"Well, if I say it's not, then it's not!" Oily

Face's lips hung so loose that he was positively hideous.

Callahan grinned. "That's great melodrama, but bad real life. What's the grouch?"

"Margate stole my play!"

"Stale stuff," said Callahan. "What's the O. Henry twist?"

"I'll give the O. Henry twist, all right," snarled Oily Face, diving down into his pocket and fishing out a stiff folded paper. "Here's an injunction. Eat it and I hope you'll get indigestion. Your play's not going on!" He fairly threw the paper at Callahan, and started toward the back of the stage.

Eve's knees knocked so loud that she heard them. At last she was a real heroine. She would save the play, and Callahan would give her a big part out of gratitude. She saw her name in electric lights on Broadway, blinding the eyes of all passers-by — particularly the home town folks who said she'd never do anything.

Meanwhile, as she struggled to find her voice, there was a scuffle in the middle of the stage, where Callahan was squeezing daylights out of Oily Face.

And then, just like a real heroine, Eve awoke from her stupor and commanded: "Stop!" If she had died that moment, her glorious ghost might always look back and say that life had been worth while.

Callahan let go, and Oily Face yelled: "She's the thief! Now I understand! She's the thief!" He

gasped for breath. "She's in the business to steal! Thief! Thief!"

It was all so marvelous, getting a big scene like this. Eve longed to hold on to it for ever, but Callahan snapped her ecstasy in the middle by demanding. "Who are you?"

"I'm a typist. I typewrote Mr. Margate's play. Some time later this man brought me a manuscript. My books can show both dates. I saw at once he had stolen some of Mr. Margate's play, so to be on the safe side I had him sign a little paper. I have the paper here."

She reached into her blouse and brought out the tiny document that she had worn for months.

Oily Face grabbed at it, but Margate, standing behind Eve, was too swift for him.

Oily Face nearly burst a blood vessel.

"I ——" Eve tried to continue, but Callahan interrupted her, not with a big part in the play, but with a command to get back in the wings, where she belonged. Then he turned to Oily Face.

"Now, look here, young man, I've got people to prove that I've had Margate's play for three months. There may be some similarity, but that's not our fault." He bowed low before his victim. "Great minds often run in the same channel — isn't that the old witticism? Now you'd better go and whisper something to the judge about this injunction. And,

by the way, when you have another play finished, drop around and give me first chance to read it!"

As Oily Face disappeared through the stage entrance, Callahan turned to Margate and asked: "Who in the devil is that madman?"

"A son of my landlady, I think. She has a son who's supposed to be a crook. He probably found an early draft of the play in my room and thought he could turn an honest penny."

CHAPTER XXIII

ALL day, as Eve Kerwin had canvassed from office to office, she had had the feeling that something was awaiting her — something big, something mighty. Something big and mighty could mean only one thing to her strained emotions — Stanley! To be sure, she had told herself time and again that he would never write to her, but she had said it hoping to enrage Fate into proving her wrong.

Arrived at home, she groped about in all the dark corners near the door where letters and cards might hide themselves. Anyone watching her would think she had lost something precious and was hunting for it. She had lost something, and she was hunting for it. And it wasn't there.

She dragged herself wearily upstairs, jerked off her hat and coat, and, throwing herself across the couch, wept dark shadows under her eyes.

Night came down over the Square and crept stealthily into the studio. Still she lay there until aroused by the sound of a timid step on her stairs and a timid knock on her door. She jumped up, patted her hair to rights, and lighted candles.

Her visitor proved to be a young Jew of the

dreamy, intellectual type. He introduced himself shyly.

"My name is Jake Rosenheim, and I've written a book."

"And you want me to type it. Is that it?"

"No. I want you to publish it."

He was very young and very gentle, and Eve found herself smiling kindly at him.

"But I'm not a publisher, my dear boy. I'm only a plain garden-variety typist."

He looked so troubled at this, and so inarticulate, that just to humor him Eve took the sheets from his hands and sat down beside the green lamp to read.

She turned the pages quickly. She read in blocks. At midnight she was still sitting in her chair, still turning the pages, still reading in blocks.

He sat watching her, his blue eyes sparkling; his body perched expectantly on the edge of his chair.

Finally Eve gathered the sheets together and looked at him.

"You have written a great play," she said.

"It isn't a play, is it? I thought I had written a novel."

"It is the greatest play of its kind that I have ever read. Tragedy it is, poignant Jewish tragedy, in which you have wrecked the bravest Jewish ideals."

"Yes, I suppose so, and why I did it was this: We Jews are just as weak as other people, only when Jews try to prove it, other people won't listen, so I

thought it would be a good idea if I had anything to say to write it."

Eve smiled at his boyishness. "You've had something to say and you've known how to put it in writing. I'm thrilled over your book, and I know enough from my six weeks' experience in Margate's 'The Other Side' to say that this is something new under the sun. Now listen to me: what do you say to my producing it?"

"But, Miss Kerwin, do you know enough to produce a play?"

"No! But Belasco and I know people who *do* know enough, and we're not afraid to employ them and take the glory for ourselves."

It would be too late to 'phone most people, but Eve knew she could still get Margate.

He came at once in answer to her call. His quick laugh and whimsical manner seemed to frighten Rosenheim, who crawled deeper and deeper into his shell, and at last slipped quietly out and away. The others were too absorbed in his manuscript to notice when he went.

CHAPTER XXIV

"BUT suppose we do make a great play out of it," said Margate, nervously skimming page after page. "It's Spring and nobody'll put it on for you now."

"But I mean to put it on myself! Oh, I'm so thrilled! Don't you understand? It's bound to run for months! You'll be rich, I'll be rich, little Rosenheim will be rich! Success, my dear man! That is the sort of thing that makes people really happy! Big business! The romance of big ideas! Oh, Mr. Margate, you must help me! This is my chance!"

She leaned forward and began to pound out her ideas on her knee. "I'll rent a theatre for one week — a theatre that is closed for the season. I can get it for five hundred dollars. I'll engage every Broadway star that is out of a job. They'll come for nothing and take a chance on making money when the thing goes. Mr. Margate, if I make good, I'll have you to thank for everything. It was Callahan's handling of your play that gave me the idea. Oh, I know now that nothing matters in this world but the bigness of one's job — that's romance enough! It's all I want!" She walked excitedly up and down the length of the room.

As she passed him, Margate caught her wrist. "This is not all you want, Evelyn." He drew her into his arms and kissed her.

It is so sweet to be loved! So sweet to be wanted by somebody, that it doesn't always matter who the somebody is.

"Evelyn, dear, you want love and home and all that sort of thing — you know it. A mother-woman like you can't go on for ever slaving as you slave. At least she can't without love. Evelyn, will you marry me?"

It was so comforting in his arms that Eve wished with all her heart that Gabriel would blow his horn and end everything then and there, sweetly and quietly.

Along with the peace and the comfort came a burning resentment against Stanley. How dare he treat her so indifferently? How dare he gulp his success alone when it was really her sacrifice that had made him reach out for life again?

And then there rushed over her a flood of love for him. If he was waiting, it was only so that he might bring not petty success to lay at her feet, but the whole world of art marching in adulation behind his chariot.

All the comfort went out of Margate's arms. She drew away from him.

"I'm married, you know, Mr. Margate."

“Married?” His voice was full of reproach and anger.

“Yes. I really thought you knew. Stanley Bird.”

“So you’re the one! I’ve heard vague tales about Stanley’s wife leaving him, but nobody ever sees Stanley and nobody knows facts. You knew I cared for you. Why didn’t you stop me before?” Then he put his arms about her again. “We’ll get a divorce. I only wish everything were as easy as that!”

“But I love him.”

Margate glared. “Then why aren’t you with him?”

Tears rushed to Eve’s eyes. “Oh, Mr. Margate, I can’t talk to you about it. Let’s go back to our old friendship — the way it was before to-night. I need you so much! Please let’s go back!”

Margate gathered up Jake Rosenheim’s manuscript and went out hurriedly, banging the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXV

EVERY seat was taken. All "First Nighters" who happened to be in New York on June thirtieth were there. Heywood Broun, Alec Woolcott, Alan Dale, and Louie Sherwin had all come for a great laugh. There had been innumerable stories in all the newspapers about Kerwin & Co., and Eve's picture smiled out at the world from a dozen first pages. Everybody knew that Jack Ritz had never written anything before and that his name was really Jake Rosenheim.

Margate had agreed to one-third of the profits and none of the glory. "The Fall of Sebastian" was the first play of an unknown author put on by an unknown producer. That made a good newspaper story and gave them for nothing advertising that they could never have purchased for ten thousand dollars.

It is no secret that Ibsen took two years to write a play, but it is a great secret that most of the plays on Broadway are written in two days and put on after a rehearsal of two weeks.

That doesn't mean that Broadway hasn't difficulties. The difficulties are greater by reason of the

short time there is in which to solve them. During the month that it took to write and stage Rosenheim's play neither he nor Margate nor Eve slept unless it was during a stolen moment in street cars, 'buses, or taxis. Rosenheim moved down to Margate's studio, and together they shaped and tore apart and shaped again, ten thousand times, the words and the action of the play.

Poor, quiet Jake, who had never known excitement in his life, grew thin and pale.

Like all great undertakings, there was no half course possible. Eve's nine hundred dollars that she had put by so painstakingly melted in one morning down on the East Side, where she went from shop to shop and from home to home buying props that had really come from Russia.

Margate's belief in the play was so great that he backed the proposition with his signature.

From the other side of the footlights everything seems so easy that it would do no good at all to describe the terrors that rage behind the asbestos curtain.

Even the best director obtainable in New York at the time did not entirely please Eve, and the consequence was that, after a short but pointed discussion, there was no director at all.

It was no uncommon thing for Margate to burst in and say: "Sadie, you take that speech of Sebastian's about religion and, Sebastian, you take your

father's speech about money and, Father, you disappear from this scene entirely."

Actors have a genius for these changes. They all know each other's lines, and playing baseball with a scene or two doesn't in any way upset the actor's equilibrium — that is, unless he gets superstitious and resigns. Sebastian did this very thing, and it took all Eve's powers of persuasion and even her tears to bring him back into the cast.

The leading lady became ill two days before the opening, and her understudy had to be pommelled into shape.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children got out an injunction to prevent the cripples from appearing in the play, and the United Jewish Charities kicked up the dust for what they understood to be an untruthful representation of conditions on the East Side.

In describing "The Fall of Sebastian" one might say that it was the result of the Garden of Eden, crushed into four acts. Gertrude Shelby, a Broadway star, played Sebastian's sister, by far the most important rôle. Chatfield, an unknown "comer," offered his services as the lover. The broken old father, whose neurosis compels him to drive tacks all day and most of the night, was done by a German from the Deutches Theatre. The Jewish step-mother, slightly overdrawn, forces the sister on the street to earn the money that she buries in a hole in

the wall. Of course, the first man that the street-walker accosts turns out to be the man she loves.

How she isn't reformed, how Sebastian fails in his gigantic efforts not only to save his own family but to change our political system, are some of the intricacies that wind themselves in and out, back and forth through innumerable horrors, to the end of the fourth act.

Eve and Margate and Rosenheim sat like three wooden Indians far back in a second-story box. They were dazed with exhaustion. Their ears refused to hear. Their eyes refused to see. Their bodies refused to feel.

Young girls in Russian peasant costume twined in and out among the seats with trays of frozen fruit juice. It was a stifling hot night.

The curtain went up on a dubious and snickering audience that was suddenly shocked into silence by the absolute faithfulness portrayed in the tenement hallway. The stage was empty. The co-authors gave grudgingly to that audience because they knew their effects must be cumulative. There was a unanimous catch of breath as some chicken feathers twirled and blew and a grey alley cat came out from behind a garbage can, stretched himself, and disappeared through the window to a roof behind.

At the end of the first act there was a suppressed titter. At the end of the third, when the old father kills his second wife for wrecking the lives of his

first wife's children, the most sophisticated ladies in the audience were weeping, and when the curtain dropped on the fourth there wasn't a rich man in the house that would not at that moment have given every cent of his fortune to make the world a more beautiful place in which to play.

In an instant the whole audience was shouting and screaming: "Author! Author!" thundering its applause and beating its heels on the wooden floor like a stampede of Texas broncos. Then came a dusty stillness, as though the ponies had trampled the world and passed on, and the young Jew came timidly out from the wings.

It didn't matter what he said — nobody really listened. Everybody wanted to look at him, the being from whom had sprung this stupendous play.

A sudden terror seized Eve's mind — the terror of success! The fear of being grabbed by the throat and hurled round and round and round and eventually choked to death by success. The fear that success would never give her a moment of personal happiness. The fear that success would never allow her to escape — even after death!

She slipped from the dark corner of her box down the steps of the side exit into the alley.

"Producer! Producer! We want the Producer! Kerwin! Kerwin! Kerwin and Company!"

Eve stopped, choking with excitement. Success already had her by the neck! It screamed into her

ears! She felt its tentacles tighten and tighten. Throwing back her head and laughing like a mad woman, she fled out of the alley into Broadway and down Broadway toward the Square.

CHAPTER XXVI

THERE was a warm summer drizzle dimming the window-panes and the street lamps, and a scared stillness that always precedes the near-midnight rush from the theatres.

The upper floors of all business houses were black. Through the shining plate-glass of first-floor lunch rooms and bakeries shone the low-powered night lights, the bare counters covered with yellow papers ready to receive their early morning load of hot buns, doughnuts, coffee-cake, and pies.

As Eve rushed along each ray of light jumped out and slapped her in the face. Occasionally a night watchman pressed his nose against a glass pane and stared at the fleeing figure. At one place an officer stepped out of a doorway and followed her for half a block.

The rain tumbled faster and she had no umbrella. Darting across the space in front of the Flat Iron Building, she turned to the right and hurried into Fifth Avenue.

The world down there was painfully silent and dark, but not too dark for Eve to see a large man struggling along under an umbrella and followed by

a dog. The wind was set on getting the umbrella out of his hands.

After he passed, she felt him look back, and then she was conscious of the fact that his footsteps were not dying away as well-regulated footsteps going in the opposite direction should do. This discovery was startling, but on second thoughts it wasn't altogether unpleasing. Eve was young and very unhappy and lonely, and here she was racing home to an empty studio.

It had been beautiful and noble to weep alone through all the black nights, but, after all, being noble alone isn't any more fun than being a hurt little child crying without an audience.

So when Eve heard the footsteps growing distincter behind her she began to think very brave thoughts indeed. She even whispered some of them aloud: "I'm tired of tears! Stanley doesn't care! Stanley never cared! I want somebody to come into my life who can make me laugh! I want somebody who can bring me joy!" Perhaps her recklessness was the sort that comes galloping on after too great a strain.

There is no such thing as monotony even in the dullest life. Monotony is a state of mind, just as adventure is a state of mind. The people who are born with the adventure state of mind are the ones who make continuous romance, even if they never find a publisher.

Eve had longed for adventure, big adventure, like marrying Stanley Bird and making a great man out of him. The little homely adventures like baking a cake or sweeping a floor were set down in her mind as drudgery. . . .

Suddenly she remembered the great success of her play. She was a Broadway personality! She would be rich! She would put on more and more plays, but unfortunately that didn't seem to be what she wanted at all. And then right there she laughed outright. What a huge joke her ego had played upon her! In that moment most of the things done to her by her ancestors were straightened out, and her belated sense of humor burst into being. It was all really great fun! Why hadn't she seen it before?

From heaven came a sudden cloudburst. The man with the umbrella and the dog rushed up and said: "Won't you come in out of the rain?"

"I haven't sense enough!" laughed Eve as she wiped her wet face with a handkerchief.

"Well, then, won't you let me use my sense just for this evening?"

"Is it quite proper? I don't know you."

"Nothing is really proper, and nobody ever knows anybody else."

He had a charming voice, young in intonation, but world old in resonance.

He took Eve's arm and led her over to the shelter of a doorway.

"This really isn't proper," she said, pretending to stiffen.

"Well, if it will make you any easier, I'll tell you that I know your name and your history and ——"

"Not my age, I beg you!"

"Oh, I can guess that! But what I was going to say was: and your friends. The fact is I'm tired of watching you from a distance. I tell you what I'm going to do: to-morrow I'm going to hunt up old Margate and have myself formally introduced. But we'll have to let to-night count as a sort of informal prologue."

Suddenly the umbrella, acting like a naughty child whose parent has turned away for a moment, flopped and bellied and shot inside out.

They stood there in the pouring rain laughing and struggling with the bent spokes. They flopped it back, but alas! it was no longer any good as an umbrella.

Down toward the Square they proceeded, the man insisting upon holding up the useless object, much to the amusement of some people who slid by in a dry taxi.

"That's it — a taxi! A taxi! My kingdom for a taxi!" He whirled about in search of one, but Eve turned him back.

"I'm ruined, anyway, Mr. Impertinent Stranger, so what's the use spending money on me?"

"No use. So I won't be a waster. But you'll

have to move along pretty briskly unless you want death o' cold, pneumonia, and a public funeral."

"I don't!" laughed Eve as she struggled, panting, to keep pace with his long, even stride.

Every time they passed under a street lamp she was as busy looking up as he was looking down, and what she saw was the calm, determined face of a man who has made friends for ever with the sweeter things of life. In his whole being there was no nervousness. No struggle. Just beauty and peace and kindness.

Eve was glad his shoulders were a little rounded, because it made her sure that they had once borne a burden even if it were lifted now.

There was a firmness in the way he directed her across the street. A few such men exist, but the rest of the male world either do not attempt to help a woman across at all, or else they push her or drag her.

A woman might trust a man with her whole future if he showed any brains about getting her across the street!

As they came to the Brevoort, Eve said: "Where do you live?"

"Across the Square from you."

"How do you know where I live?"

"I know everything about you."

If Eve had not completely forgotten the first part of her evening, she might have remembered that she

had called a rehearsal after the play and that the whole cast had been invited by Margate to a party at a big Broadway restaurant. She might also have known that Jake Rosenheim, with a taxi chugging at the curb, would at that very moment be almost knocking the little black letters off the sign of Kerwin and Company, Typists and Producers, at Number Seventy-One Washington Square South.

She remembered nothing but that she was a sort of little pink-checkered-apron-girl and that she was having a very funny time with an Irish-looking knickerbockered-boy who had suddenly moved into her neighborhood and was getting acquainted over the back fence.

CHAPTER XXVII

It's all very well for moralists to point out the fact that a good-looking young woman — separated but not divorced — has no right to be strolling about at all hours of the night alone; certainly has no right to have young men coming to her studio whenever they feel like it; most certainly has no right to be wearing a continuous orchid in her belt. But while purists are still fighting over what the word "right" really means, most young women of the modern school occupy the time taking a chance. Eve was ultra modern.

It was an early evening hour. There was an orchid in her belt, and at her feet a young man kneeling on a Persian prayer rug.

"I love you," whispered the young man.

Of course, that isn't a very new way of putting it, but, after all, is there anything new?

If she had been less mother and more female she might have made a bit of fun, but she felt very sorry and very motherly, so she held his hands and smoothed back his hair. Of course, nobody denies that that also is very old business.

"I love you, too," she answered.

The young man sprang to his feet. All young men do under the circumstances. "Then you'll marry me!" he gulped.

"Not so fast," she answered. "Let's talk this serious business over. You don't love me that way. You're good and sweet and at the very beginning of your career. Look at those marvelous clippings!" She pointed to a mighty pile on the table beside them.

One might have been led to believe that the young man who stood trembling before Eve was the one who had offered her his umbrella in the storm, but of course it was not that young man at all. It was Jack Ritz, alias Jake Rosenheim, whose play was the biggest thing New York had experienced in a long time and whose pockets, hitherto empty, were beginning to jingle, jingle, jingle with shining gold.

Eve forced his attention to the pile of criticisms again. "Now you've succeeded, because I believed in you sufficiently to risk almost nothing to put on your play. According to fiction, your next move is to ask me to marry you. I'm twenty-six, you're twenty-one, and oh! how many millions of years older than a man of twenty-one is a woman twenty-six! And then, to add to the difficulties, I'm already married."

"But you know you haven't seen your husband for over two years, and for all you know he may be dead."

"Now, Jack, you think you hope he is dead, but you really don't hope anything of the sort. I couldn't marry you. I don't love you that way any more than you love me that way. Why, it's all too ridiculous! Let's make a bargain."

"All right," he muttered. "What's the bargain?"

Eve began to tell off the items on her left palm with the index finger of her right hand. "Good! First, no more orchids — lovely, but what's the use? If you insist that my style of beauty demands them, I'll leave an order with the florist to send me a daily decoration. Next, we are going to get after another play at once. Third, I'm going to be just as I was — your mamma-sister-friend!"

"All right," he said doggedly, but Eve detected a suspicion of relief in his tone.

"Bless its little buttons and buttonholes," she said, glancing over his shoulders at the clock. "The curtain is up on the two hundredth performance of its great play, and here it is in Washington Square making love to a concrete wall! I'll race you all the way to the theatre!"

Nobody minded the clatter down the stairway, as nobody in New York minds anything, and nobody even looked at them as they went tearing across the Square and through the Arch, except a big man with Irish blue eyes. He was sitting on a bench in a dark corner holding an Airedale in his lap.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THERE are certain things in life that leave a sort of blotting-paper effect on the human soul. Not the least of these is refusing to marry somebody — especially when one is lonely.

Does one, then, wish to marry the man whom one has just refused? Certainly not! But just at that moment one realizes that one wishes to marry somebody!

The play had been running for months. All through the summer, hot and sticky, there wasn't even one vacant seat in which the weary author or the weary producer might rest.

The weary author found himself besieged by requests for plays, but he always insisted that he was signed up body and soul with Kerwin and Company.

The weary author, heretofore all artistic and un-Jewish in the matter of business, acquired a little motor-car and moved grandma, aunts, cousins, uncles, sisters, and brothers from the house in Harlem to a nice old place on Lexington Avenue. Also it was said that he had been seen fumbling with things that he called stocks and bonds.

The little firm of Kerwin and Company got into

the "Personality" column, and Eve was pigeon-holed beside Mary Elizabeth and Olive Shreiner and other great women of the age.

Authors, long-haired authors, short-haired authors, successful and unsuccessful, swarmed about Number Seventy-One Washington Square South. They brought wheelbarrows of manuscripts, as though the mere fact of having them copied by Kerwin and Company might in some miraculous way start them along the shimmering path to Forty-Second Street and Broadway.

Eve had a Corn Exchange banking account and a sensible Greenwich Savings Bank account, but no stocks and bonds. She had an idea that such things were too time-absorbing.

There were ten new typewriters and ten new typists. They now occupied the entire loft below Eve's studio, and the rattling machines shouted through the none too thick flooring: "Money! Money! Money!" and after that more success and then more success again.

Little Miss Gumbiner, developing into the ablest of managers, moved her struggling mother and father, her aunts, uncles, cousins, her brothers and sisters, from their various tenements on Rivington Street to a brownstone front in Harlem. Moses, her baby brother, resigned his position as office boy and went back to high school.

So Eve had success, success and money, but in her

heart a monotony that was growing deadlier from month to month. One moment of happiness she had every day when she opened the morning paper and found Stanley's cartoon. She loved the way he signed his name — just the little sparrow in the lower right-hand corner.

But one moment isn't much in twenty-four hours!

One evening in December she stood at her window looking out over the deserted Square. What a buzz it had been all the summer! What a human picture! Now what silence and what a twilight! What a moment it would be for Stanley to come to her and take her in his arms! She rehearsed all the things he would say to her. First he would tell her that it was she who had made him great. She would then proceed playfully to deny this, and he would insist that if she hadn't actually made him great, she had had brains enough to leave him so that he might make himself great.

Patiently she waited, but nothing happened. Finally she turned her back on the Square and lost herself in the warm beauty of her rooms. All the soft rugs, all the dull old mahogany greeted her with an affectionate harmony. She lighted the alcohol lamp under the kettle and brewed herself a cup of tea.

Loneliness is an indefinite sort of misery, the sort that would welcome with enthusiasm a knife turned round in the heart — anything to vary the monotony!

And then, on the other hand, it becomes a sort of

frozen joy. How one courts it! How one loves it! How one cherishes it! And all the while, just around the corner perhaps, another lonely somebody could easily change the whole map of one's world!

Eve sat sipping her tea and looking intently at Stanley's cartoons. Of late they had seemed a little different. They were unsteady. The little bird in the corner didn't have quite the usual number of tail feathers. Something was wrong. She had felt it for a long time without admitting it. Something was happening to him! Then suddenly, with the belief that he was calling to her all the way across the city, she jerked on her hat and coat and rushed out to him.

Blindfolded she could have found her way to his tenement — that tenement that had been a glorious hope for them both such a little while ago!

She did not stop to ring the downstairs bell. Impassable oceans could not have stayed her then. She flew up the winding stairway and pounded on his door. It gave back a hollow, ghostly sound. She knocked again. The little card holder above the bell was empty. Oh, well, that didn't matter; he probably didn't want his name there. Perhaps he had moved into a more prosperous tenement. That was it exactly! Why should he remain in the cheap one when he was making such a lot of money?

She raced down the stairs to look at all the names

on the mail boxes. It was too dark to read them and she had no matches. . . .

If only Marj hadn't got ill and moved away to the mountains! She would have known all about him!

The only thing left was to ring the manager's bell and ask. Eve's legs trembled beneath her. It was hard — to ask a stranger the whereabouts of her husband, but not half so hard as not finding him now that the ache had slashed through her determination to leave him alone.

The manager was out, and the janitor was a new janitor. There was no Mr. Bird living in the tenements — in fact, there hadn't been in his time, and he had come more than six months ago.

Perhaps the Painter Man would know! Eve looked across the street to the Painter Man's windows — his curtainless, his unmistakable windows that stood open the year round to sun and rain and snow. They, too, were gone, and in their place were the closed windows of conventionality with dotted muslin curtains.

Weary and confused, Eve dragged herself to the Second Avenue car. Suddenly her mental picture of Stanley vanished from its frame. So long as she had thought of him as comfortable and happy and successful in the place where she had known him, he had been real to her. Now, when she no longer knew where he was, she couldn't even see his face.

All the way back to the Square she kept her eyes

closed, struggling to recall his features. An old spiritualist had once told her that so long as you can see the face of the beloved one you can send a message. When the face disappears, then the tie is broken.

She could not see his face! She knew what kind of hair he had, of course — light gold and unruly like a little boy's. He wore it brushed back from his brow, and it blew in the wind. It had an obstreperous cowlick on the left side. His eyes? Why, of course, they were blue. His nose, his chin — certainly she could see each feature separately, but when she tried to put them together they vanished into nothingness.

"Oh, Stanley, I need you! I need you!" she moaned.

Then suddenly, just as she reached Washington Square, her feelings changed. A little black imp rose up from somewhere inside of her, laughed in her ear, and whispered: "You don't need him as much as you imagine!"

Was this true? Was it possible? Did the imp mean to suggest the — the Impertinent Stranger? . . .

Since the night of the storm Eve had seen him once and only once, when Margate had taken them both out to dinner. His name was Bob Casey, and he had shown her where he lived on the Square just across from her. She had promised him a cup of tea some time, but as yet had never set the date.

She had also promised some time to have tea with him.

“Why not now?” whispered the imp. “He’ll cheer you up, and you need cheering!”

“No! No!” Eve insisted vehemently. But, in spite of her vehemence, she didn’t climb the stairs of Seventy-One South. Instead she walked round and round the Square and then diagonally across, and then in and out the various paths pretending to herself she didn’t know perfectly well that no matter how many miles she walked in circles she would eventually stop and ring Mr. Bob Casey’s bell.

CHAPTER XXIX

EVE was bowed in by a Japanese servant and told to make herself happy. The funny little yellow man said that Mr. Casey had left word that when she came she was to have tea and a folio of prints to look at, and then she was to wait until he returned.

The funny little yellow man offered her a big squashy, mulberry velvet chair, put a blue cushion under her feet, a tea table beside her, and served her tea in Gold Medallion china so encrusted with gentlemen, blue-birds, butterflies and roses that it must have taken a brush to cleanse it properly.

For a moment Eve was furious at Mr. Casey's assurance that she would come to him, but, after all, here she was, and that made it ridiculous to be furious. So she laughed, and the funny little yellow man smiled sympathetically, lighted a coral lamp over her head, gave her the folio of prints, and disappeared.

Eve looked around Bob Casey's home without getting up from her chair.

There was a blue Chinese rug on the floor, the thickest, heaviest rug that Eve had ever stepped upon.

There was a frame sunk in the north wall, and the picture in it was the only one in the huge room.

There were three high windows across the front, and the middle one was reached by some carved stairs, at the top of which rested a little Chinese temple, just framing the trees and the stars of the Square.

"I hope I haven't kept you waiting very long," said Mr. Casey, coming toward her noiselessly.

"You haven't," laughed Eve. "I've been enjoying the room. Rather fun finding out what kind of a man you really are."

"Have you found out?" he inquired. His tone was serious, but his Irish eyes were laughing.

"I'm not so sure. You have Oriental taste even down to your servants, but so many of you artistic New Yorkers have that, that it alone means nothing."

"But I'm not in the least artistic — I'm a dog trainer! Here, Anatole France! Here, boy!" he called, and a whimsical-looking Airedale danced into the room.

"This is the canine gentleman you have met before, but he is just one of forty. Now we won't do our tricks, but we are very highly educated." He patted the dog and sent him out of the room.

"You mean, Mr. Casey, you are a real dog trainer?"

"Yes, a real dog trainer! Come up into my temple with me where we can see the night, and I

will tell you all about myself." He offered Eve his hand to pull her to her feet.

Eve held back. "First I want to know if you are married?"

"Not yet."

"Then you're engaged?"

"At present, yes — in an amusing conversation with you."

"Mr. Casey, you know what I mean."

"Indeed, I do, but I haven't the slightest intention of answering you. A woman is never so interesting as when she is curious, and to satisfy her at once would mean a joy with an amputated head. I am holding all guillotines in reserve."

Eve had every intention of making him satisfy her curiosity about himself, but after they had gone up into the temple and settled themselves on a soft rug, to look out over the Square, it was she and not he who talked. To her own surprise she found herself telling him everything, from beginning to end. He listened to her quietly. When she was done, he said:

"If you love your husband, why did you leave him?"

"Because his success meant more to me than anything in the world."

"Then you didn't love him."

"I don't understand you."

"My meaning is simple. You loved what he

represented to you — that is, you loved being married to a genius. When he proved to be ungeniushy, you fled. To give him a chance is what you told yourself, but really it was to give yourself less trouble. Your first mistake was in marrying when neither of you was passionately in love.”

“We were great friends. That’s a better foundation than passion.”

“Words, mere words, my dear. It’s difficult enough for two people to make a go of things even when they start on the basis of not being able to live without each other.”

He sat watching her a moment in silence. Through the set stare in her eyes he could see that she was thinking.

“I’ve never thought about that side of it,” she said finally. “Nobody has ever talked to me as you have. All I know is that I’ve been utterly wretched all through my success, and I thought the wretchedness was my longing for Stanley. Now you happen along and make me out a fool instead of a martyr.”

He turned suddenly and put his big arm around her and patted her far shoulder. “Not a bit of it! There is a part of you that loves him and wants to do things for him. But that’s the mother in you — everybody has that, even men. I’ve got it strong, that’s why I keep the two Airedales and a Jap valet. But you really don’t want a man-baby, you want a

child-baby — in fact a whole bouquet of child-babies! Don't you, now?"

Eve was very tired. Just at that moment she didn't look like Kerwin and Company at all, but just like a plain woman who has drunk her fill of the artistic world and longs to lie back in the arms of a competent business man and sleep for a million years.

Like so many of her own generation, she longed with half her heart to march forward and perform all the radical feats that had ever been written about. She wanted her success, fought for and won without the help of anybody. She wanted her independence, her freedom! And the other half of her heart raced back one million years in search of the superb male to dominate her and to give her babies and babies, and then more babies!

Eve began to cry. Eves always do that, or else run away, when they want to be loved. It all depends upon the Adam in the case. Eve knew that this particular Adam would let her run — alone, so she sat still and wept.

"Mr. Casey — please don't think me a fool — I — I ——" and she sobbed comfortably and deeply on his shoulder.

"Such an adorable little fool! Don't you think you ought to laugh yourself to death at the mere fact that my name is Casey? I do at least once every morning, and that keeps me in good gay spirits for the rest of the day."

“Well, it is funny to think that I ——” She hesitated, and he finished the sentence for her: — “could be interested in a man with a name like Bob Casey.”

“Not exactly that, but almost that.”

He laughed pleasantly. “I thought so. But let me tell you, young woman, there’s everything in a name. Think of having to fight the birthright of Bob Casey! It simply couldn’t be done, so I capitalized it! First, I put out Bob Casey’s Lemonade when I was six; then Bob Casey’s Home-laid Eggs when I was eleven; Bob Casey’s Airedales when I was eighteen, and ever since. Why, a name like that is the biggest advertising boomerang a fellow ever had! All the Irish come to see my show because they love me, and all the rest come because they hate the Irish.”

“Are you still a vaudeviller?” Eve asked, wiping her eyes on his handkerchief.

“No, I stopped that four years ago. But I’ve still got three companies on the road — ‘Casey’s Airedales,’ giving two shows a day on good circuits, and sending me in a weekly check big enough to allow me to settle down and enjoy art.”

“Do you really like pictures?” she asked, looking about the high walls, bare except for the one exquisite landscape that melted into the background rather than hung on it.

“Like pictures?” He walked down the temple

steps and over toward his treasure. "Love pictures, I should rather say. Don't you see this?"

"Yes, but you've just got one. Seems to me if you loved them you'd have a great many. Your walls here could hold fifty with comfort."

He put his hand to his forehead and wailed: "Fifty pictures to live with! I'd prefer a harem! At least you could ignore forty-nine ladies! Come here!" He disappeared into a dark opening and turned on a high-powered light.

Eve followed, and there on little shelves were arranged pictures of every size and subject. Some were framed, some were unframed, some of the canvases were not even nailed on stretchers.

"This is my storehouse. I hang one picture at a time. I live with it, not till I'm tired of it, but till I've made it a part of me. Then I accept an introduction to another. It's like a lady — I'd get confused if I had to live with more than one at a time."

Eve didn't quite understand his view-point, but she had a hot desire to fly across the Square and snatch down a few of her own before he got the chance to see them hanging in vivid battalions on every inch of wall.

He led the way out of his storehouse, looked at his watch, then dropped it back into his vest pocket. He wore neither fob nor chain.

"I'm not questioning my watch to send you home, but to see if it's late enough to go somewhere."

Eve had a sudden vision of marble and gilt cabarets and shuddered.

"I'd just rather go home, I think. I don't like restaurants much. The noise makes my head ache."

"Not my kind of restaurant. I'll take you somewhere nice and still. Come on in here and powder your nose. You've wept your whole coating off into my handkerchief."

He opened a little box labelled: "Don't be extravagant," and left her alone.

Eve laughed. She felt very feminine and joyous, very dependent and expectant. In those few minutes before she faced him in his large studio again she had unconsciously decided a number of momentous issues.

She put on her hat and started into the hallway. At the top of the stairs she turned and said: "Once I visited a man in this building when I first went into business for myself, and I was so unhappy I hated the place. I like it now."

"I'm very glad, and I know I shall like your house, too, even unto the millions of pictures crowded on your walls."

Eve felt suddenly naked before him. How did he know she had millions of pictures? If he could see like that a whole block away, then he must know other mysterious things! Again she felt like fleeing before he peeped into her mind.

At the bottom of the stairs he laid his hand on her

arm. “Now, haven’t you millions of pictures, and didn’t you long to pull them down before I found out? Honest, truth!”

“Well — yes, I did, but only at first. I know now that it would have been dreadful if I had done it, because I love millions of pictures on my walls.”

“Then you shall always have millions of pictures on your walls!”

CHAPTER XXX

“GOOD EVENING, Mr. Casey!”

The waitresses all smiled at him, and greeted him by name. That's worth a million dollars a minute to a lonely bachelor in New York.

“Good evening, Clara,” said Mr. Casey, as he pulled out a heavy Flemish oak chair for Eve.

Serious Bohemia subdivides itself into two classes: first the dingy, unsuccessful, and struggling artists like Eve's neighbors around Washington Square, and next the successful ones, who pay dues at great clubs about town, and still long in their secret hearts to be invited to tea at the Astorbilts.

It was right into the heart of this group of artists-arrived that Bob Casey introduced Eve.

The club was shining and proper like an excellent hotel — only much pleasanter. The people were well dressed and clean and too æsthetic to handle money before each other in the dining-room. They paid by signing little slips of yellow paper.

In Washington Square also they don't handle money before each other, but for a different reason — they haven't it to handle.

Casey ordered without a menu. That always gives a casual air to expenditure, and Eve liked it. She was happy — much happier than she had been since she stumbled into New York.

“Clara, give us some of those puffy little soufflé things with fresh mushrooms and bits of white chicken, and a plain salad with the dressing I like, and some coffee.”

“What a charming place!” Eve beamed. “I’ve been invited here many times, but I’ve always refused. I didn’t think it would interest me.”

“And it does? I wonder why?”

“Perhaps because you didn’t invite me, you simply took me!”

“That *does* make a difference with a woman. I like the place. It’s somehow sweet. It’s well got up but not offensive, and it represents things achieved. It is bourgeois Bohemia. Of course, it has its comical side, but so have funerals.”

Someone came toward them from the other end of the long dining-room.

“Oh, Mr. Shults!” called Casey, and Shults stopped jerkily like a “Hoch der Kaiser!” before his superior officer. “Miss Kerwin, may I present Mr. Shults? Mr. Shults, this is my very dear friend, Miss Kerwin, and I warn you, Miss Kerwin, not to get on the Teutonic situation, as Mr. Shults has strong ideas.”

“I promise not to argue,” said Eve, and Shults

was coaxed into a seat beside them and given a stein of beer as a peace offering.

The soufflé things came, and so did a man named Baker and a Scotch sculptor man and a cameo-faced woman with a lovely daughter.

Another table was pushed up and more food ordered, and they argued and came to conclusions and argued some more till the waitresses went home and the night-watchman gently but firmly turned off all the lights.

Reluctantly then they got up and straggled slowly through the long picture gallery, criticizing this picture or approving that one, always in technical phrases of many words, until at last, with handshakes and confused good nights, Eve and Casey came out on the Nineteenth Street side and wandered down towards the Square.

What was the use of arguing with the thrill that shot through her every time she took his arm? It was like arguing with the Twinge — it would eventually get the best of her. The thrill was there and it was delightful, and she was tired of analyzing the joy out of things.

But the mind of the dog-trainer was busy on another trail. He wanted to be married. He was actually hunting for a mate, not to the exclusion of other sports, but rather as a side issue. He liked little dogs — as a matter of fact, he loved them —

and he had learned through them how much nicer little babies would be.

He wanted a lot of babies — mostly girls, he believed, with tall pink taffeta bows standing up over their left ears, and stiff white pinafores coming somewhere above the knees. He knew nothing about the colic and measles and whooping-cough that lead up to the pinafore age, nor the school books and courtings, and heartaches that follow after it. He saw the taffeta bows all around his dinner table, and the emotional joy in that was sufficient without going into details. In just the same slipshod way he admitted that he wanted a half-dozen or so of boys, but he didn't want too many. That was all he was certain about — he didn't want too many, but a half-dozen or so would be all right.

His ambition can be forgiven by more conservative and far-sighted persons when it is remembered that his ideas of family life had been influenced largely by rollicking litters of pups. Though pups only wear leather collars, they do somehow get you in line for pink taffeta bows.

It was nearly daylight when Eve entered her studio and locked the door against the outside world.

Her heart had sung ten million joyous tunes on that journey back from the big Club, and it was not as though she had been with him for eight hours, but for ten million years to match the ten million joyous tunes in her heart.

There was a contrasting shot of pain across the joyous tunes, but she couldn't think what it was — she didn't want to think what it was.

Mechanically her clothes came off and hung themselves in their proper places. A nightgown slipped over her head, the bed unmade itself and tucked her in, and there she lay flat on her back, with her eyes staring up through the sky-lighted roof into heaven.

The corner of her pillow sank, and a little fluffy ball settled down under her ear and purred understandingly.

It was Kittums! Before Eve realized what she was doing she nearly squeezed the little being into breathlessness.

Any less human cat would have fled in disgust, but Kittums merely stood up, shook herself out, stretched, and settled down again.

“Kittums, I've got a great heap to tell you.”

“Rumble, rumble, rumble!” purred Kittums sympathetically.

“You're absolutely the only person I can trust.”

“Rumblety, rumblety, rumblety!” murmured Kittums' conceit-generator.

“You see, it's this way. I've met a man.” The rumbling came to a sudden stop. “I knew you'd feel that way, but you needn't, because it doesn't at all mean that I'm going to do anything desperate. I merely want to talk it over with you to get it clear in my own head. That's the only reason humans

ever talk things over — they want to convince themselves.” The rumbling started up again, with an extra little whistle on the end of each rumble.

“Now, Kittums, you know how I feel about Stanley.” And then the pain that had been shooting across her happiness made itself understood, and she buried her face in the soft pillow. The dam that she had been building to protect herself and her love for him cracked from end to end and fell with a loud crash, and the tears that she had stored flooded through, destroying all the hills and valleys of peace that had looked so secure but a moment before.

Kittums crawled up close, but Eve sobbed more and more disconsolately.

“Stanley, I want you! I want you! I don’t care how miserable you make me, I want you!” . . .

CHAPTER XXXI

IN the stifling waiting-room at St. Luke's Hospital, Eve ran hurriedly over her friendship with Marj Prouty. She remembered with a sudden pang the generous way in which Marj had accepted her upon her arrival in New York, and as she followed the poker-faced nurse up to Marj's room she made a vow that she would see Marj every day, rain or shine, and nurse her back to health.

Eve was very gay with Marj — as gay and rattly as Marj herself used to be.

“ Well, Marj, dear, when did you come? Did you enjoy the mountains? Where is the Shepherd? How long will you be here? ”

“ I — came — a week ago, ” whispered Marj, her breath jerking sharply, as though it came from a tiny compartment in the top of her lungs.

“ Fine ! ” said Eve in that boisterous manner people assume when they are sitting *vis-à-vis* with death. “ Well, we'll get you out of here in a few weeks, and then you can come down to my studio and stay with me. The Shepherd, too. You know I'm disgustingly rich, or will be soon, and I have two whole floors at Number Seventy-One. ”

“I know — we heard — my Shepherd told me — but I’ll never leave here. I — I’m going to die.”

That hideous fact was written beyond doubt on Marj’s little face, but Eve was deeply shocked that Marj herself should know it.

“Marj, dear — you mustn’t talk that way — why, you ——”

But the little claw hand crept out of the covers and clutched at Eve’s rounded palm. “Eve, there is no chance.” The pale eyes closed with exhaustion, or went perhaps for a moment’s glimpse into the hereafter. “They’ve told me — you see — it’s not only consumption — it’s that horrible anæmia thing — no hope — doctors don’t know anything about it — except that it kills. They’ve told me — last night I would have thrown myself out of the window — I’m half dead already — the window is high — I — I couldn’t reach it.”

“But, Marj, dear, we want you here — I ——” What else could Eve say?

“Please, Eve, don’t set your strong thoughts against mine — I want to die — to die before my Shepherd comes here to-night — and I want you to help me die — otherwise — I would not have sent for you — I know you hate ugly sights — those lovely roses — let me smell them — pansies, see, and red roses have souls ——”

She wandered off again, and Eve sat holding the

little hot hand, her own fingers steady and her mind bewilderingly calm in the face of so much tragedy.

“What time, Eve?” Marj asked, reaching for the flowers that had dropped to her breast.

“Quarter of four, dear. Can I do something for you?”

“Help me to die at four — everybody’s helping — I’ve asked them all to help. You know, Eve, I’d be patient if there was any hope, but it’s only a matter of days now and I want to go. If I don’t, my Shepherd will die, too — he wasn’t made to stand — this — this sort of thing.”

“I’ll help, dear!” said Eve, clutching the little hand in her own and pressing on her brain to make it think but one thing — death — death — death!

Marj closed her eyes and moved her lips in a last effort to say something.

Eve leaned over with her ear close to Marj’s lips. “Pansies — see — and red — red roses — have souls.”

CHAPTER XXXII

EVE and Casey had gone up into the Temple again. Suddenly in the stillness he spoke:

“I love everything. I love everybody. My parents were happy, so how can I help it? I love little things most of all, and little babies most of all little things. I’ve succeeded because I’ve never once waited for anything marvelous to happen. I wasn’t fed on fairy tales, so I don’t believe in luck — that is, not much. I just went on doing the nearest thing at hand so that jobs shouldn’t accumulate. That’s why a farm is good training — you simply have to do insignificant chores all the time. I don’t discount my beautiful health and my beautiful boyhood — they were assets, and the fellow who gets anywhere without them is a mystery to me. I’m going to start out to-morrow and find Stanley Bird, and if I don’t find him I’m going to get you a divorce by default, and then I’m going to marry you, and we’ll buy a place near New York where your long right arm can reach your work and your short left one, nearest the heart, can pet your babies.”

If Eve had been more astute she might have known that her aching sob and her lonely wail of: “Stan-

ley, I want you! I don't care how miserable you make me, I want you!" was a cry of sex.

If she had been more astute she might have known that she didn't want Stanley at all, but Bob Casey! Casey, with his great broad shoulders and his great broad humor! Casey, made to be father of many as she was made to be mother of many! Casey, whose quiet manner covered the power to bend her, twist her, break her if he wanted to! Casey, the superb, the dominating male!

He wanted Eve. The call of love was hungry in his throat, and Eve, like the female of the species, was ready to dash down the mountain-side, tear her flesh in the briars, swim the icy water, stagger along weary and famished — anything, so that she might answer that call!

In the million years that elapsed during the second before Eve found herself crushed against him she felt the press of certain inherited puritanical ideas of duty, certain compunctions of conscience concerning her husband. But the powerful arms of the other man swept them aside.

Of course, in such cases there are terrible regrets when the woman is alone again. She formulates intricate arguments against any further acquaintance with the other man, and all the while she is perfectly sure that she will answer again when he calls to her even across so wide a desert as Washington Square!

Eve moved quietly out of Casey's arms, so that

she might have the infinite pleasure of tumbling into them again.

She said:

“There are lots of things that we must discuss — we ——”

“We what?” asked Casey abruptly.

Eve stood silent against a pillar of the Temple like some dark figure collecting evidence.

Again Casey said:

“What?”

“Oh, so much!” she whispered excitedly, pressing her palms together in an effort to force the words into her tongue. “So much — I’ve no divorce — my husband — I can’t marry you unless I’m free. Stanley — perhaps he needs me still — perhaps ——”

The man who has once stirred the woman he wants is foolish not to keep on stirring her, at least, until she is so well mixed that she can no longer say: “This I regret; this I must not do; this is wrong; this is right!”

Casey reached out and drew her towards him. He kissed the velvet under her chin and then, pressing her lips hard against hers, held her close till the tenseness in her body relaxed and she gave way contentedly in his arms.

“What?” he asked again.

“Bob, dear, there hasn’t ever been anything like this before! But Stanley — you’ve got to help me — what if he wants me again?”

"You don't want him again, do you?"

"One part of me does."

"Now look here, Eve, do be sensible and drop all this neurotic stuff. You lived with him long enough to know that you were both miserable. Am I right?"

"Yes."

"Well, life ought to be more gracious than to thrust you into each other's way again. Life's just full of purposes — great beautiful purposes, if people would only not meddle with them. I'm going down to the *American* to-morrow to talk it over with him myself. I'll guarantee that he'll allow you to get a God-fearing divorce on the one ground that our noble State allows."

"You travel too fast, Bob!" she laughed, patting his great hand.

"It can't be too fast for me. Now about Stanley: I honestly think he doesn't want you any more. No criticism of you, my dear! I want a lady lioness; but for a man like Stanley, timid, artistic, imaginative — why, a woman like you drives him crazy. Am I right? Tell me!" He made her look up at him. "Am I?"

"Yes, you're right. Women like me are lionesses. We've got to do things. We've got to make our husbands do things. We've got to run them, and if they're the kind that can't be run, instead of helping

them we paralyze them. Poor Stanley, all he wanted was to be let alone."

"His work proves that, doesn't it?" asked Casey.

"It's not as good as it was. Something's been happening to him, I'm sure."

"Your own work, Eve, I want you to keep going — some of it, the interesting part, but from now on I want Miss Gumbiner to run that typewriting business alone. Give her not only half the profits, but twenty-five a week besides. That will relieve you, and if I hear of you getting up again any day before noon, I'll divorce you!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

"CREAM, please, and no sugar. Cream is nourishing, but sugar is a chemical poison. I hope, Miss Kerwin, that you don't eat sugar!"

Is there anything in the catalogue of social usage that bridges distances like a tea table? The person who invented it should long ago have got the Nobel Prize.

Eve answered her guest carefully. "Well, I do occasionally take sugar, but I won't if you say it's bad for me."

He was a tall, misshapen man with quick, ferret eyes that seemed always to be escaping pursuit. His shoulders were crooked, and his under teeth stood so far out beyond his upper ones that it gave him, along with his clumps of yellow hair, the aspect of a weary camel.

Poor camel-man! He sat with his battered cap in one hand and a voluminous manuscript in the other.

He seemed confused about the cup of tea because he hadn't a third hand.

"Do put your cap down and drink your tea. Let me have your cap."

He glared unspeakable things at her and stuffed

his cap behind him in his chair. "You don't take lemon, Miss Kerwin! Lemon turns the tannin into poison! It makes the lining of your stomach like leather!"

All the lemons that Eve had ever taken with tea began to parade before her, and she could actually feel how brown she was inside.

"To tell the truth, Mr. Culpepper, I used to be awfully germy and all that, but I've had so much work to do in the past few years that I'd almost forgotten. I surely will not take lemon if you think it's bad for me. Have some cookies?"

"Heavens, no!" he gasped, at the same time deftly extracting a little tissue-paper package from his pocket. "Have some health bread. I always carry it with me. Nuts and raisins — quite a meal in itself!"

Eve struggled politely to eat the tasteless stuff, but after a brave effort was forced to hide it in her napkin and backslide to cookies.

"Have one more cup, Mr. Culpepper, and then tell me about the manuscript." Eve filled his cup, and he sipped it tenderly.

"You want me to make a final copy, Mr. Culpepper?"

"Oh dear, no! I do my own typing. Always wonder how a person can trust a final copy to an outsider — so important, the final copy — so much more important than the original draft! One might

trust that to almost anyone." He began to shuffle through the loose leaves. "I want you to publish my play. It is called 'The Breath of God.'

"But I'm not a publisher. I don't know the first thing about publishing; and, besides, I haven't any money to put into such a venture."

"Well, I hoped you might be willing to risk, say, five hundred dollars, to print enough copies for the reviewers, and then, if the thing made any kind of a stir, somebody would print more, and then for your five hundred I'd give you half interest in the production of the play. It's a great play! I assure you, it's a great play!"

Most women would have laughed in his face, but Eve took the manuscript and promised to read it. All the way down the stairs he kept looking back at her with his camel-face urging her to go into the matter carefully.

She almost pushed him out, she was so anxious to be alone again with all the unhappy mysteries that clouded her brain. Stanley had disappeared. Nobody knew where he was. His comics had been continued by another artist for ages past. Thinking back, she could remember almost the day of the change. She got down her scrap-book and was able to turn at once to the very last thing that Stanley had done. She jerked out the new man's work and burned it in the grate.

Of course, she was glad that Bob had managed it

all so well, but with the quick granting of the divorce and the severing of her life with Stanley there fell a great blot across the white scheme of things, with the knowledge that, no matter what success she might have now, no matter how many exquisite children she might bear, no matter how much she might come to love her new husband, one thing would always stand out clear and definite — her unsatisfied love for Stanley. . . . Isn't it in the human order of things that the one big task that we fail to accomplish should sting us into everlasting remembrance of it?

She was free. The courts had said so. She might do as she pleased, live as she pleased. She ought to be happy, but she was wretched. Her breath came thickly and seemed to hurt half-way up. Bob had tired of her moods and was gone away cruising. She was to fight it out alone. Her legs were leaden; her head a battlefield of emotions. The terror of indecision was upon her.

Maddened by the necessity of escaping from herself, she picked up the camel-man's play.

At ten, at twelve, at two, at four she was still turning the pages. At six, she snapped off the lights and raised the curtain to the valiant August sun.

At seven she had read the last word.

The camel-man, indeed, the gentle fool upon whom in her ignorance she had smiled in kindly scorn! Well, he was a fool — a God's fool, a genius! Who

was he? Whence had he come? Had he ever written anything before? And who was she that such a manuscript should come falling straight from heaven into her folded hands?

CHAPTER XXXIV

HAD not the camel-man come swinging across the wastes with health bread in his pockets and a marvelous play in his hands, Eve might have had a nervous breakdown.

Under the spell of "The Breath of God" she didn't have the time. It was after the Lanes had accepted it that she sent a note to Mr. Ames asking for an interview.

Up the thick-carpeted stairway she climbed to his private office above "The Little Theatre." There was a silence and sweetness about the place that made her feel Winthrop Ames could not exist away from the things he loved.

"Another marvelous horror, Miss Kerwin?" He asked the question with his fine head cocked a trifle to the side.

"No, sir!" she whispered, leaning across as though she were a little girl confiding in her papa. "A marvelous marvel! The most gorgeous tale ever told in this world, and all the fairies in it are real people! It is just the opposite of realism, earthiness, and fact, and yet, Mr. Ames, it might all very well be the truth."

His bloodless, aquiline face was immediately responsive. "Why don't you put it on yourself, Miss Kerwin?"

"Mr. Ames, I'd bungle it! It's your kind of play. It's for the man who isn't afraid to buy ten thousand dollars' worth of props, even if he has to throw them all away. It's for the man who put on 'The Children of Earth,' Mr. Ames, for the man who knows!"

Wasn't it human of him to sit there and smile at Eve? She could have wept with gratitude.

"Miss Kerwin, you would make a great actress."

"A very bad actress, if you'll excuse me. I've tried it. I couldn't work nightly with imaginary problems. My problems have got to be real!"

Mr. Ames has a reputation for seldom expressing his enthusiasm, but he cocked his head sideways again and laughed like a boy. "Well, I'll run through it this evening. Come back to-morrow at this time, and if it's what you say it is we'll startle New York with it sometime during the coming winter."

Eve raced away with a jumpy joy inside her such as she hadn't felt for years. In fact, the only other time that she ever had felt it was in the dim greyness of that morning when she left Port Illington, when the fast train rushed on through the daybreak into the mysteries of the years that lay before her.

Some of those years she had lived — wasted, perhaps, so far as personal happiness was concerned, but

then again not wasted if she could feel still the young, pounding sensation of things straight before her still to be attained.

She bought a cocky little black velvet tam and a ruff to match it and a new blouse. After that she climbed on top of a Fifth Avenue 'bus and joggled down to the Arch.

The only reason Mr. Ames did not stay up all night reading "The Breath of God" was that he read more quickly than Eve. It is enough to say his enthusiasm, that so few people ever saw, stirred and boiled over. When Eve arrived at the appointed hour next day all the pessimism, for which he is famous, had been bound and drugged and carted off.

"Miss Kerwin, you're right: a play like this doesn't happen oftener than once in a century. It is all that you think it is. There is only one thing that bothers me now: the man to do the sets."

Eve sat perfectly silent, pressing her hands together till they ached. So she had been right! Winthrop Ames was saying so!

"There is a man over in Paris, an Aubrey Beardsley person by the name of Moineau. Greater than Bakst, I think. He hasn't Bakst's orientalism, but then he isn't oriental—he's French. He has a delicate imagination, almost feminine. I've never in my life seen such colors as he paints. I didn't know there were such colors."

"I've never even heard of him, Mr. Ames, but he

seems to be the fairy prince to do this fairy play."

"Yes, he's the man. But how to get him to do it? He's so much the vogue in Paris, so beyond reach, he'd never even acknowledge a written request. I wish I were going to Paris myself at this time."

"Can't you send someone, Mr. Ames? It would be worth it."

"Yes, I must send someone; but no ordinary commercial agent would do. He'd never get any nearer than a letter."

"Mr. Ames," Eve ventured in a voice a little shaky with excitement, "mightn't I be a suitable person? Couldn't I do it?"

He looked at her quickly and answered: "Yes, you could do it. You're the very person, Miss Kerwin."

CHAPTER XXXV

IN the quiet of her cabin, with the whistles shrieking overhead and the shout for all visitors to leave the ship dinning in their ears, Bob crushed Eve tightly in his arms. "Dearest," he whispered, "I'm glad we were married this morning! I am glad, too, that you're getting this great chance. You deserve it. Your success is just another guarantee that my judgment in loving you so much is correct. But remember one thing, dear: I'm here waiting for you every moment of the time until you come back."

She clung to him as she had never clung to anybody in her life. Her hands were passionately caressing his eyes, his lips, his hair. She pressed her face against his and felt their cheeks cling where her tears cemented them together. Again and again she jerked herself out of his arms only to fly back again, breathless for his protection.

Big, brave fellow that he was, all the words had gone out of his head. "I'm glad you married me this morning, dear," was all that he could find in the great treasure-house of beautiful things he had in his heart to say to her.

"It's so hard to go," she sobbed, "so hard to go

away! I'll come back quickly! I'll come back quickly!" Then the whistles shrieked again, and Casey disappeared.

The band was playing something that made Eve weep more. She felt at last the soft rocking of the ship, and picking up her little Irish flag that was the mate to one he had in his pocket, she struggled up to the promenade deck and pushed her way through to the railing.

The ship slid out past the cheering mob on the pier. Everybody on board was straining to get one last glimpse of somebody on land. The people on the pier cheered bravely — they were certain about themselves — the people on the ship waved their hands in silence.

Eve struggled to get one last look at her husband, but the tears were streaming so fast that all she could do was to wave her little Irish flag and pretend to see. Suddenly her vision cleared, and there, in the back of the dimming mob, rose a hand that clutched a bit of green silk.

"Oh — oh — oh!" was all that she could find to say, and then again the tears flooded out the beauty of the world.

CHAPTER XXXVI

EVE felt a stir as she entered the room. It was an American party in Paris. She knew she was striking, with her black hair brushed straight back from her forehead and her high-waisted black gown billowing over silver roses down to her silver slippers.

"It was awfully good of you to let me come, Mrs. Hartman," Eve said as she clasped the hand of the hostess. "This is my one day of frivolity. Tomorrow I go to work!"

Mrs. Hartman was an American who had lived in Paris in the same apartment for thirty years. She always insisted that she couldn't move because, if she did, her old friends coming back to Paris would never be able to find her.

"I'm going to take you around and introduce you myself, Miss Kerwin, and then leave you to your fate."

She piloted Eve to a group of Californians. "Miss Kerwin, may I present Mr. Clifford, Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Kane — all from the Golden West."

They all three struggled for Eve's hand at the same time, and said in chorus: "Ever been in California?"

Everybody in the little group burst into laughter.

"Of all homesick people," confided Mrs. Hartman, "Californians are the most dreadful. Whenever you see a crowd of them together you may be sure they are discussing Chinamen and fogs."

"Wish I had a chestful of it now," muttered Kane.

"What? Chinamen?" asked Eve.

"No! F-o-g — fog!" He spelled the word with a worshipful tenderness. "Really, Miss Kerwin, ever been in California?"

"No," she answered. Then she added, gushingly: "Tell me all about it!"

"I beg of you, Miss Kerwin, don't start him!" laughed Mrs. Hartman, pulling Eve away. "He's worse than a man about his first baby. Come, meet all the people and then choose for yourself. Just you get into the hands of a homesick Californian early in the evening, and you might as well decide on what message you want to leave your folks."

Mr. Kane followed Eve as she floated about with the incredible little old lady and met another group and another, and felt, with a certain warmth of satisfaction, that people were discussing her.

She hoped they all knew that she was a producer of plays. She also very much hoped that they had found out her errand in Paris. She had hinted in undertones that she was frightfully busy. Of course, people always asked, "Doing what?" and then she

told them in an off-hand, reticent way what she was dying for them to know.

"If you'll tell me all about yourself, Miss Kerwin," Mr. Kane was saying, "I'll tell you all about California."

Eve drew a deep preparatory breath when suddenly her attention was caught by the figure of a lovely little creature who stood for a moment in the silken frame of the doorway.

She might have stepped from a pink and white canvas by Watteau. Her red lips were parted and there was a warm eagerness in her blue eyes. She had about her that appeal of love which all women long to possess.

Eve would have known that she was a mother even if Mr. Kane had not whispered: "Little French woman. Two of the loveliest new babies you ever saw in your life; twin girls of her very own and two boys that were nobody's. Got an idea that she can only properly thank God for her own by taking in two foundlings."

And then Mrs. Hartman took the little satin shepherdess by the hand, and together they trailed about the room greeting old friends and meeting new ones.

"Miss Kerwin," Mrs. Hartman said, "this is Madame Moineau. You must know each other."

Eve glowed with pleasure. "Moineau! Are you the wife of *the* Moineau?"

"I am wife of ver' dear man — *ze* Moineau to me, and I am proud I can say *ze* Moineau to all world, but for different reason."

"I see," said Eve. "You'd love him even if he didn't make the most fantastic scenery in all the world!"

"Would love him if he do nothing but be my Monsieur Moineau."

"That's heavenly — I mean loving like that. But I'm interested for another reason. I came all the way to Paris to beg your Monsieur Moineau to design the scenery for a new play I am helping to put on back in America."

"*You* help to put on play? Then you have none of babies?" The little woman pressed Eve's hand sympathetically.

"No, I haven't any babies, but some day I hope to have. Putting on plays won't keep me from having babies, will it?"

"Oh, yes — you would not want to make plays — I think perhaps you make *ze* play because you will like to have *ze* baby."

"Oh, no, really, I could do both, and I hope to do them both well. You see, Americans must have professions, too."

"And *zis* is not professions — having baby?" There was not the slightest hint of irony in Madame Moineau's voice, only innocent inquiry.

"Well, of course, having babies is the noblest pro-

fession, but it's no longer enough." Eve accepted a salad from a colored servant and asked Madame Moineau to share the divan with her and Mr. Kane, who had succumbed to a fit of melancholy because nobody was talking about California.

"Is Monsieur coming to-night?" asked Eve, hoping to fall into his good graces by first capturing his little wife.

"Oh, no, he is out in ze land — what you say, country. You see, sky he paint in studio my husband say is no sky, no color, no nothing. He paint each sky from God's model, zen he catch him always different. God make his model lovely and free."

"But he will come back soon?" asked Eve.

"Oh, yes, he is only at St. Cloud. He is come back to-morrow midday. You come first to my house, we shall make surprise. Oh, he like ver' much pleasant surprise. I will show you four baby. He will be more please when you admire baby as when you admire sky. He say baby is greatest work of art and we must have baker's dozen!"

In the morning there wasn't any sunshine; there wasn't any rain; just a foggy indecision of atmosphere that threw Paris into the sulks.

"Just like life," Eve whispered into her satin muff as she hurried along toward the river. "Nobody ever sees very far ahead, and that's why we can be brave." The next moment she forgot what she was

saying and bought a bag of hot chestnuts from a street vendor.

It was heavenly to be in Paris; to look into the lighted shop-windows; to bump into strange figures in the fog; to stand on the quay and watch the slender boats dart up out of the dimness and disappear like porpoises into the greyness again.

At last the sun grew braver. One by one candles and lamps blinked out. The world popped up clear and workaday with nothing of mystery left.

Eve lifted the brass knocker on Monsieur Moineau's door. A little starched maid, looking exactly as though she had stepped from a comic opera chorus, took Eve's wraps and ushered her into a beautiful room.

Heavy chenille carpets silenced her steps as she walked about examining the wonders that hung everywhere — paintings, prints, old brackets, miniatures, silhouettes, all resting harmoniously against velvet walls of Gobelin blue.

It was the home of a lover of possessions filled to crowding with things he could not exist without.

How different from Bob Casey's studio in Washington Square! Bob was the collector whose possessions must be shown one at a time lest they struggle with each other for supremacy.

In Moineau's house there was no struggle. Each treasure hung or stood close to its neighbor in a

co-operative fashion for the good of all. The whole place was peace and harmony and luxurious love.

From somewhere in the house came the twittering and rustling of babies, and over it all the sweet voice of the mother bird, chirping gaily as she preened their feathers for presentation to the world.

Eve advanced to meet them. Downstairs they came — babies, white-capped nurse, chirping mother, and behind them all a man. Suddenly to Eve the world went black, and terror filled her heart. She closed her eyes, denying the truth of her sight. She opened them again, and the man was still — Stanley!

CHAPTER XXXVII

HIS golden hair was brushed back from his forehead, and a small moustache and imperial gave his face a courtly slimness.

There was a new lift to his head; a new strength and straightness to his backbone; a new power in his eyes.

"Zis is my husband, Miss Kerwin, and zose our family," said the little woman, and the joyous tone in which she sang "husband" and "family" and the little trail of rippling laughter that followed, gave Eve an added moment in which to struggle against utter collapse.

Stanley took Eve's hand, and instantly the demand that shot from his eyes was answered by a promise from hers.

He spoke first: "This is a very great surprise. I did not know that we had a visitor. My little woman is always surprising me with something lovely." He dropped Eve's hand and took one of the girl babies from his wife's arms.

"Kiss the beautiful American lady, Jaqueline," he coaxed, pressing the infant's soft face against Eve's cheek.

Eve held out her quivering arms, and Stanley laid his baby in them. She held the little bundle very close to her heart.

"Zey are ver' friendly, our little girls, are zey not, Miss Kerwin, and our little boys zey are friendly, too."

The nurse held up one of the little boys, and he opened his tiny pink mouth and touched Eve straight on the lips.

Eve knew that she must say something. Her body trembled, her brain ached, and her lips were cold and stiff. She mumbled she knew not what, and then, with a desperate effort, sank into a chair, saying: "Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man."

It wasn't very inventive, and the baby was entirely too young to be amused by the jingle, but it was a way of gaining time.

Every moment helped. She laughed a little and the baby smiled, and at last, feeling suddenly alive again, Eve was able to talk.

"These are the very loveliest babies in all the world! Madame Moineau, you must be a sort of universal mother to take in little strangers with all you have to do for your own daughters. Monsieur, did you get your sky? Was it foggy in the country? Did you go far? I was so afraid you wouldn't see me that I paved the way to success through your wife."

Of course, Eve knew that she was rattling on like

a mad woman, but Madame Moineau probably thought that all American ladies rattled on.

Came another hideous silence, and Stanley told his wife to take the babies away. Eve clung to them.

"Oh, don't!" she begged. "I love babies! They really don't bother me at all! I want them!"

"Oh, ver' well, Miss Kerwin, but you know we French peoples show our baby, zen put him back in ze nursery. It is different in America, my husband tell me. Zere ze baby put ze parent back in ze nursery!" The little woman came close to her husband and looked up with a worshipful smile.

All that Eve longed for at that moment was a million years in which to look and look at the changes in Stanley. She didn't at all want to make conversation with the loving doll under his arm.

About Stanley there was an aura of power and defiance. He had a new way of snapping his teeth together suddenly, as though he were going to push through a mob and probably kill forty or fifty people on the way. He was the huge male animal standing there beside his timid female. The drop of his eyelid was her law, and she looked up into his face as though to obey that law was the thing for which the divine God had created her.

"Shall you remain long in Paris, Miss Kerwin?" asked Stanley.

It was the very question that she had seen waver-

ing in his eyes, the very question she knew she must answer before they could proceed on friendly terms.

“Only long enough to get you to sign a contract with Winthrop Ames, Monsieur Moineau.”

“Me!” he gasped, and she thought she detected a certain bending of his spine — a certain drooping of his shoulders.

“You!” she gasped back, laughing as she gasped and thankful in her soul to be able to burrow through the strain to a joking imitation of his surprise. “You!” she repeated. “Aren’t you the greatest designer in Paris? Hasn’t Mr. Ames sent me all the way over just to get a personal promise from you? You *will* design the sets for Mr. Ames, won’t you?”

“Why, yes, certainly. It’s a great honor. But aren’t you exaggerating a bit? Of course, though, I know my position and I know what I can do, and, furthermore, I know what I am going to do in the future, and that’s something that will startle even Mr. Ames!”

Eve saw that Stanley was losing his temper with her and quite in the old-fashioned way. The fear that Madame Moineau might get a glimmer of what was going on in his mind brought her abruptly to her feet.

“I must look at the babies a moment longer, and then perhaps we had better go to your studio and talk business, Monsieur Moineau.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII

ALL the way across the little park that separated the studio from the home Eve and Stanley walked in silence. There was an animal defiance in him as he threw his shoulders back. There was a crying weariness in her that crept down into her dragging feet.

Suddenly they stopped at the entrance of the sky-lighted building, and their eyes met. She knew that passionate look in his. The answer was written broad across her own face.

He turned from her, unlocked the door and flung it open. She thought he meant to lead the way and they collided.

Eve's finger-tips flew to her eyes, and she pressed hard on the closed lids as though to shut out the sight of him and his wife and their babies. Utterly unable to move from the spot, she leaned against the door-jamb — all her defiance gone, all her power.

There were no tears in Stanley's eyes. His head was erect, his shoulders stiff. He put his arms about her and lifted rather than guided her up the three flights of narrow stairs.

In the studio he sank into a low chair and covered his face with his hands.

Through and through Eve's being surged all the old agony — every drop of blood in her body crying for his love. She stood before him sobbing: "Oh, Stanley, why couldn't you and I have gone like this — why couldn't you have succeeded with me, dear! What is there in this woman that I haven't got? Tell me, Stanley! Tell me!"

His lips trembled and his voice came unsteadily:

"She believes in me. She's the first person who ever did. She hasn't any brains — just love. If I explain an idea, she doesn't understand what I mean, but she listens like a little mouse, and when I'm through she tells me she loves me. She loves what I do because I do it. She kisses each finger every morning before I go to work and tells them to make beautiful pictures. And I love her for it. Oh, Eve, we have been so happy! So sensibly happy! So full of pleasures and successes! I worship her for bringing out the best in me. Sometimes I wonder if she hasn't more sense than all the women in the whole world put together. I wonder if she hasn't too much sense to show me she has any. She's always tactful, always loving, always incredibly where I want her. We had a dreadful time at first. I was working at St. Cloud." He laughed bitterly. "Starving at St. Cloud — when she found me and took me home to her old mother. They were very poor, but they fed

me and let me sleep in their shop among the coal-oil cans and ropes and candles and firewood at night, and in the daytime I worked out of doors. Always struggling with the old ideas. I never lost faith in the big things; it was only the little ones that drove me mad. The first real canvas was born at St. Cloud, and the others came quick like a flood through the broken place in a dam. I brought them to town. I sold them and got orders for more and more and more. It was like a colossal dream — I sprang into life in one short month. I'm made, Eve! I'm a great man! You know now that I'm a great man if Winthrop Ames would send you all the way to Paris to buy me!"

"Do you know what I've been doing?" she asked, and suddenly he darted from his chair and strode up and down the room, kicking at the floor as though he would destroy it utterly.

"Do I know?" he shouted. "I've watched every step you've taken! God, how I hate that ambition in you — it kills absolutely every fibre of energy I've got! You understand too damn' well! A man with ideas would waste 'em on you — talk 'em out! Live with a woman like the one I've married, and you can't make her understand an idea! I've got to paint it out in colors, and even then she thinks it's great only because I've done it."

He stopped in front of her and shook his fist in her face.

"I'm a great man — great! Do you understand?"

He began to pace again.

"Nobody over here knows who I am. Nobody knew I had a wife in America when I married here. It was a reckless thing to do, but I knew you'd divorce me sooner or later and I wanted to have her beside me all the time. I couldn't wait. I took the big chance and depended on your decency to keep still if you ever found out. And the name ——" He laughed good-naturedly at last. "I took the name Moineau after the little sparrow I used to sign in the lower right-hand corner of my stuff. You remember? I couldn't think of anything else at the moment. I've been Moineau ever since."

He took Eve's two hands and smoothed them gently up and down in the old way that used to quiet her nerves.

Wild things were beating her brain into madness. If he would only take her in his arms! If he would only come back to her, she would learn all the things the other woman knew! She would be careful! She would kiss his finger-tips each morning! She would love him and love him and love him!

"Eve," he whispered, "now that I'm great, if I had you back I'd not only be great, I'd be the greatest man in the world! I want our long talks together. In the old days I never had you for a minute. You treated me like a child. I want you

entirely. I want your body and your heart and your soul — I want you!”

He placed his two hot hands on her shoulders. She could feel her heart throb in her throat. What if he should hold her close to him! Her resistance was ebbing!

He laughed hysterically. “A great idea has just occurred to me, Eve — a really funny idea. I’ve had my success. I’ve shown the world what I can do — my ego is satisfied. After all, that’s the principal joy of success — showing somebody! Putting it over the dubs back in our home town that said we were crazy! What if I should refuse to work any longer? Suppose you and I go away together and be happy tramps, and play and play and play for ever until the very end of life!”

Slowly he slumped into a chair. His fine blond hair looked suddenly mussed and untidy. Even the exquisitely tailored coat that had seemed so perfect a fit a few moments before rode high over his collar, as though it had not been made for him. The old lazy look crept over his body as he crossed his legs and relaxed on the middle of his spine.

“Eve, come over here and sit down. I want to talk to you. I’ve been the goll derndest fool the way I’ve worked since I left America. I did it just to spite you — you devil, for the way you deserted me!”

His tie had pulled loose and lumpy, and there was a crumpled look about his cuffs.

Just then the brass knocker pounded against the panels of the downstairs door.

"My model," Stanley said. "Let her wait!"

Eve drew a quick breath.

"Let her come up, Stanley, dear, let her come up!"

Stanley caught both of Eve's hands and mashed them brutally in his.

"Will you come back to-night if I let her come up now?"

"Yes, I'll come back to-night!"

CHAPTER XXXIX

It was very dark. All the way as Eve hurried toward Stanley's studio she was a thing not of brain, but of flaming emotion. She couldn't think — she didn't want to think! She wanted to feel!

Everything that she had labored so hard to build up was slipping away from her. But she didn't care if the whole world came to an end in another day so long as it gave her back in those last few hours the love that she had suffered for, the love that she must have!

What was success? What was fame? What was honor that made a slave of her, so long as her body could ache and tremble and thrill as it was aching and trembling and thrilling now!

What were scruples in the face of passion? Nothing! Nothing — if the passion was only big enough!

And then, as though some violent poison were taking effect, her face and throat were suddenly contorted with pain. A man came toward her from the opposite direction. It was Stanley. She was lost! Now she could never turn back. She leaned, shuddering, against the wall.

The man came abreast of her and passed on. He was not Stanley.

Then, without warning, dead Marj and the Shepherd and the Painter Man and the old heart-breaking life in the tenements swept back across her brain like a destructive cyclone.

That would be what she would have to live through again if she went away with Stanley! He wouldn't work if he lived with her! He had said so! He would save all his energy for torturing and criticizing her! She would ruin him again! She would ruin herself! She would smash Bob's glorious world into muddy bits! And that wasn't what she wanted of life! That would be nothing short of a spiteful insanity. What she wanted of life was work and babies and peace! What she wanted of life was the big constructive thing, the big love — the love that knew nothing of hate and anger and heart-breaking adjustments. What she wanted of life was Bob!

She drew herself together and stumbled away, far away from the little street into the traffic of a crowded thoroughfare.

THE END

George Held, Albany and New York.

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